





MARFA

OR

THE OPIUM SMUGGLERS
Of St. Clair River.

By
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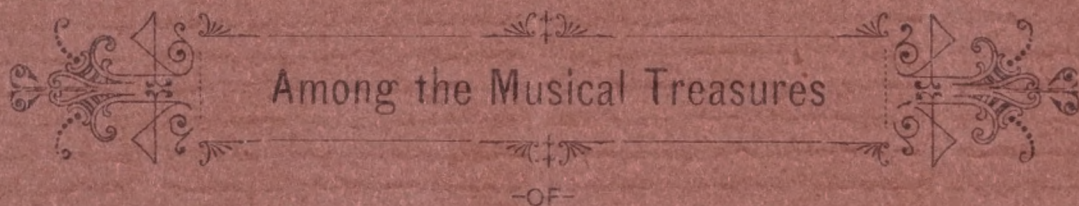
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"She appeared to be gazing earnestly at some object on the river."

MARFA

A STORY OF THE

OPIUM SMUGGLERS

OF THE

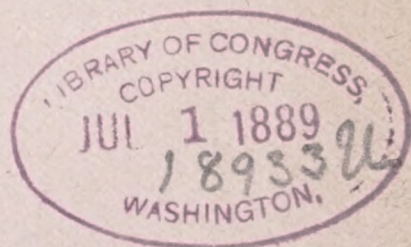
St. Clair River.

BY

35
MRS. H. T. HOLLANDS.

DETROIT:

1889.



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CHAPTER I.

A CELESTIAL VISITOR.

Old Jake was singing at the top of his voice:

“Way down upon de Suannee riber,
Far, far away,
Dar’s where my heart am turnin’ ebber,
Dar’s where de ole folks stay.

All de world” —

Just then his wife called to him: “Here, you Jake! you see dat wood-pile? Now you jes stop dat singin’ an’ chop me sum wood! I’s gwine make hoe-cake for supper.”

“Hoe-cake, Mumsy, how you come tink o’ hoe-cake? Dat ar waters my mouf. I’s gwine tink I’s down in ole Wirginny when I eats dat hoe-cake.”

“Doan let me heah no moah. You jes git out now, an’ chop dat wood. ’Pears like you don’ do nuffin now days ’cept loaf roun’ an’ sing dem ole plantation songs. You tink I’s gwine keep a lazy good-for-nuffin like you, an’ chop my own wood?”

“Hol’ on, ole woman, hol’ on, I’s gwine right away now;” and he dodged around the corner, singing as he went.

Old Mumsy lifted a corner of her blue check

apron, and brushed some imaginary dust from the well scoured table, on which she placed the necessary ingredients and began to stir the hoe-cake; stopping now and then to listen for the sound of the axe in the back yard.

Chuck, chuck—she heard it for a short time, and then all was still. She shook her head ominously.

“Dat no 'count loafer 's lazin' agin. Jes let him wait till I gits my hans outen dis muss. I'se gwine make him stan' roun'.”

Before she could execute her threat, Jake came staggering in with a scanty armful of wood, which he dropped into the wood-box with a deep-drawn sigh of simulated weariness.

“Dar, Mumsy, now you bake you' hoe-cake all right. I'se gwine out an' look aroun'; I hearn strange soun's jes now. Pears like dey come from de ole elm tree down dere by de hen coop. Sumfin' after dem young chickens, I'se afeard.”

“O, go 'long now; dat's only make believe, so's you gits down dat ole musket, den you goes off coon huntin' agin, 'stead o' hoein' dem taters.”

“No, Mumsy—hones' truf dis time; you come hark yousef.”

Mumsy patted the hoe-cake with the big iron spoon, set it down before the fire, then washed her hands, and taking the coarse gray towel, followed Jake, drying them as she walked along.

“You heah dat, Mumsy?” Jake whispered, as

he dodged behind a tree, and covered his eyes with his trembling hands. "You tink coon make dat soun'."

"Hush up," she said, as a low, wailing sound reached them. She cautiously walked along, a few steps at a time, slower and slower, as she drew near the spot from which the sound seemed to come.

Jake in the meantime trembled behind the tree, occasionally venturing a peep between his fingers.

At last Mumsy stood still and beckoned to him. Past experience warned him of the danger of disobedience. He left his hiding place and slowly approached her.

"Look a dar Jake," she said, pointing to a white bundle under the tree.

"Fo' de Lawd's sake, Mumsy, what am it?"

"Dat's jes what I'se gwine ter see," she said valiantly.

Stooping down, she carefully examined the bundle, then jumped backward, exclaiming, "Laws a massa Jake, if 'taint an angel."

"I'se mighty shuah dat am an angel's face Mumsy, but I doan see no wings."

"Hush up now, I'se gwine ter 'vestigate," and taking the bundle in her great motherly arms, she unbuttoned the white wool cloak, and threw back the silk lined hood.

What a vision met their wondering gaze!

Great expressive brown eyes looked out from a

tear-stained face, and from the tiny mouth a pitiful cry escaped. A damp mass of golden brown hair formed a frame for the pretty picture.

Mumsy's maternal instinct was equal to the occasion. She drew the child to her ample bosom, and crooned over it in a motherly way, until an occasional sob was all that told of the infantile storm.

Meantime Jake stood by the tree, with clasped hands, and closed eyes turned heavenward praying aloud.

"Lawd a'mighty, jes lis'en to dis poah sinnah fo' a minnit. You's sent dis little angel straight down from Hebben; now jes help ole Jake a bit, an he's gwine gib you his promis'—pon honah—he's gwine take good care of it, an keep it pure an' pritty, jes like 'tis now, till de angel ob def comes to fotch it home agin. Amen."

Mumsy returned to the cabin, with the little strayling held closely in her arms, and Jake at her heels.

As they drew near the door, two or three long gaunt dogs came yelping and sniffing around them, as if aware that something unusual had happened.

"Git down you! Linkum, Sherman, Dixie," said Mumsy. "Jake, you jes gwine shet up dem noisy houns. Dey's shuah to make dis honey cry agin."

Jake trudged off at Mumsy's bidding, while she

entered the cabin and carefully laid the little visitor on the bed.

The old rocking chair, with the help of pillows and cushions, was soon converted into a comfortable cradle.

When Mumsy removed the cloak, and lifted the sleeping child into the chair, a piece of paper awkwardly folded into the form of a letter, fell to the floor.

She picked it up and spreading it out on her broad hand, gazed curiously on the sprawling characters which covered it.

"Look a heah Jake," said she, as he entered the door with the scared look still on his face, "Ise mos shuah dat dar writin' nevah come from Heben."

"Be keerful Mumsy—be keerful. Doan' say dat. How come you forgit so soon.? Doan' you know how de preacher tol' us how de Lawd's gwine do his own work in jes his own way? Spec like he knows what He's doin' when he sen' dat writin'."

Mumsy, rather taken back by Jake's theology, slipped the paper in her pocket without a word.

She tucked the baby snugly in the chair, and took a peep at the hoe-cake, which had been forgotten during the excitement.

"Heah you Jake," she said in a softened voice, "no moah loafin' now sah. Sot down heah now an' rock dis baby, while Ise gwine git de suppa."

Jake, delighted with the proposed task, obeyed willingly.

His musical powers were rather unusual. A pleasing contralto voice was contrasted with low chest tones, which formed a bass accompaniment to his plantation melodies and hymns.

With a trembling voice he sang as he rocked the old chair to and fro:

Bye o baby sleep, o
Shet you little peep, o
Doan you wake till mawnin
'Till de sun shines high.

Button up you eyes now ;
Baby mus'nt cry now ;
Fly away to dream-land,
Bye, o baby, bye.

CHAPTER II.

MUMSY'S VICTORY.

Several years previous to the incidents just recorded, Jake and Mumsy were slaves on a large plantation in Virginia.

During the unsettled condition of the country at that time they had joined the "ranks of the run-aways," and were assisted in their flight to freedom by the managers of the "underground system," as it was called.

When the war was ended, and they had gradually acquired the knowledge of their safety in freedom, they ventured back to the "States" again.

They found an empty cabin in the center of a maple grove a short distance from the river shore. They took possession of it and had called it their home for many years.

Near the cabin, in the center of a cleared spot, and surrounded by the ancient trees of the grove, was an unfinished ruinous old house, ivy-draped and weather-stained.

Mark Payne, the owner of this property, was young and handsome, rich and talented; a rare and happy combination.

Socially, the world held few attractions for him. As a student and traveler he was known to his many friends.

He had inherited the property as we now find it, a many-gabled, queer looking structure with but one habitable room.

This was in the upper story, and had an outlook from a dormer window in one of the gables over a great stretch of river.

The walls were lined with books, and the furniture was an odd medley of bric-a-brac and curios which the owner had collected during his travels.

To this quiet spot he also brought his literary treasures and arranged them to his own satisfaction, before offering them to the great reading world.

It was during one of his trips abroad that strange stories began to circulate through the neighborhood concerning the old house.

Dark forms were seen dodging among the trees near the door. Lights flashed through the cracks between the weather-beaten boards that formed the sides of the building, and angry voices were heard by the belated farmers on their way home from the county seat.

Jake and Mumsy, when questioned in regard to these strange doings, were sullenly silent.

Their reticence on the subject soon placed them under the cloud of suspicion. This, together with the race prejudice—far more wide-spread then than

now—soon forced them to their position as outcasts; consequently they held undisputed possession of the child two or three months before it was seen by their neighbors.

She was a bright little creature and soon grew contented and happy in her new home. Under Mumsy's careful supervision, Jake held the position of chief nurse.

How gloriously bright the world seemed now to the poor fellow. Mumsy's threats and scoldings fell on a deaf ear, when with his charge in his arms, or on his shoulder, he wandered through the grove, or paced the sandy beach, talking and singing to the "little angel," as he called her.

As is often the case, there had been many disputes over the naming of the child.

Jake pleaded and Mumsy scolded.

"I know" he said "dey's bof scripter names, but Mary seems smooover like, an' more fit for dis pritty angel."

But Mumsy never yielded a point, when Jake was her opponent, and the child was called "Marfa."

Jake still held the idea that she had been sent from Heaven, and imagined he could sometimes see in her large dreamy eyes, a reflection of the bright home from whence she came.

One day, while he was sitting on a rude seat, near the road that divided the grove in two sections

and singing in his peculiar way, a passer-by questioned him in regard to the child.

Jake was frightened. He made no reply, but folding his long arms around his treasure, he drew her closer to his breast, as if to shield her from some threatened danger, and walked hurriedly to the cabin.

The next day a village officer rapped at the low door.

Mumsy caught a glimpse of his badge through an open window. A few low spoken words, and quick movements, and Jake with the child in his arms, was secreted in the little bed-room.

Then she opened the door and stepped on the threshold. By a careful arrangement of her skirts and elbows she completely shut out a view of the interior from the officer. A series of low growls greeted him from the inside of the cabin, which caused him to step back a pace or two before he spoke.

“Good mawnin, sah,” said Mumsy, an ominous glitter brightening her eye.

“Good morning, good morning, my good woman,” and the speaker rubbed his hands briskly together, “how are all the folks to-day?”

“Jake an’ me’s tolable, thankee.”

“That’s good. And how is the baby?”

“Baby! Sho! Go ’long now. No pickaninies roun’ dis place fo’ shuah.”

"You must have company then," and the speaker stretched out his neck, and made an effort to get a view of the interior of the cabin. But Mumsy raised her shoulders, and spread her elbows until she seemed to fill the entire opening.

"Company," she answered scornfully; "whose gwine company in dis yeah cabin? 'Pears like you's mighty 'quisitive to-day."

The smiling face of the visitor gradually lengthened, and a sense of the ridiculousness of the situation flashed through his mind.

He had been chosen by the village officers to solve the mystery which surrounded the little cabin in the grove, and he decided to do his duty, however unpleasant it might be. Assuming a stern voice, he said, "Look here my good woman, I've heard enough of your nonsense. You have a white child in your possession. You must tell me how it came here, or I shall be obliged to take it with me."

"Sho! now. Whose gwine make me talk les en Ise a min' to?" asked Mumsy. "Sposen is a white chile roun' heah, what bizness dat o' yourn? Aint you got white chile enuff? I min' I see ten or a dozen swarmin' roun' your place tudder day."

"That's nothing to do with this affair," said he impatiently. "Bring that young one out here, and save yourself further trouble,"

"Furder trubble!" shrieked Mumsy, now thor-

oughly aroused, "I make you funder trubble. Heah you! Linkum! Sherman! Dixie!"

She stepped out of the doorway, as the troop of gaunt hounds came rushing through.

Her fat sides shook with laughter as she watched the retreating form of the officer, dodging among the trees, in his frantic efforts to reach his carriage and escape the dogs.

"I spec he git trubble 'nuff dis time," she said wiping the tears from her eyes with her apron. "De no 'count low lived white trash."

She watched him until she saw him climb into his carriage and drive toward the village. Then she called the dogs and entered the cabin. Jake, with the child in his arms, and trembling with fear, was peeping through a crack in the bedroom door.

"Heah you," she said, "come outen dat now, an' put dat dar chile in de cheer. Spec like we aint gwine be boddered agin wiv dat sort o' company."

CHAPTER III.

A MIDNIGHT MEETING.

The *feu follet*
The spectral ray
Floats on the night wind's breath.
Now near — now far —
The ghostly star,
Lures on, and on, to death!

The fascination that surrounds the thought of smuggling, like the *feu follet* of early days, has lured many good people to their ruin.

The transportation of contraband goods "over the line," is a world-wide custom, and the St. Clair river is particularly favorable for such unlawful transactions. For more than twenty-five miles it stretches along, wide and deep, forming a grand watery highway, over which many proscribed cargoes have been conveyed, while the honest officials were wrapped in blankets and dreams.

It was a dark moonless night. The west wind bent the trees in the grove, until they writhed and creaked.

The deep water sent out a low, sullen roar, and the long, white crested waves rolled and tumbled over each other, in their mad race to the sandy beach.

The old house in the grove was wrapped in gloomy shadows, through which silent forms moved cautiously toward the open door. They went through, the door was closed, and a soft click told that the key was turned.

A light flickered for a moment and then burned clear and bright, revealing four queer looking figures, wearing long yellow tarpaulin cloaks, with peaked hoods, drawn over their heads and partly concealing their faces.

When these were removed, old Jake — with a few more wrinkles on his honest face than when we saw him last — stood among them.

Near him was the leader of the little band — a picturesque and uncommon character, who deserves a description. A bent figure with a brown wizened face, — a perfect mass of wrinkles, — which moved up and down continually, as he mumbled the narcotic *killekenic* with his toothless gums. His heavy gray eye brows stood out at right angles, with his face, and from under them peered a pair of shining black eyes.

He was known to his companions and his little world of acquaintances as French Joe. He was a genuine indigene; a fair specimen of the original habitant, superstitious, fun-loving, and reckless.

The other half of the quartette were overgrown boys, awkward specimens of the same specie, who

followed Joe's advice and obeyed his commands with a blind faith in his superior sagacity.

When all were seated on the rough bench that reached across one side of the room, with the lantern on the floor near them, Joe drew a tin tobacco box from his pocket, and pressing a spring, the lid flew open with a snap. When all had been served liberally he returned it to his pocket and said:

"Now, boys, I wanto tol you sumting. When I go on de town de udder day—I tink dat's 'bout de five of June—I hear sumting dat makes me mad. Dat blaggard—Max Le Blanc—he stan' on a beeg crowd, near de pos' offeece, an' talk. I go back leetle way, where he don' see me, den I leesten. Now what you tink he say? He tol how two, tree night before he go feeshin. He go in his skiff, wid plenty pitch pine all blazin' in his jack. He no ketch much feesh, so he let his boat float down de reever. He tink mebbby he's gon fin' better place.

"Bime by, he say he hear, way off, near de udder shore, sum soun' like de oar—dip, dip—in de water. He set still behin' his light an watch. De blaze make long streak on de water, like de day. Bime by he see a boat cross dat streak, an' make for dis side.

"He turn his jack, an' spill his fire in de water. When ali come dark, den he foller dat boat. He see it make for de cove, so he make for de cove. When he come near, he hear like de clink of chain.

He hurry up, an' when he get dere he see noting, only Jake's boat wid de chain woun' roun' de tree. He call two, tree time — nobody speak — den he go home.

"Now, boys, who make fool of heemself like dat? Who make de boat go on dat light? Dat you, Jake?"

"No, Massa Joe. I'se dun shuah I ain't gwine do like dat. 'Twan't me. Hones' truf."

"Dat you, Danyell? You go on dat boat when I don't tol you?"

Dan looked at his companion, and then at Joe, but remained silent.

"What for you no speak?" said Joe, raising his voice as he became more excited.

"Ask Tom," was the reply in a low tone.

"Tomaw, dat you go on dat boat?"

But Tom's courage failed him and he trembled in silence.

Joe, becoming thoroughly angry at their behavior, shook his fist in their frightened faces and said:

"Sacre! if you no speak, I trash you."

"Wait one meenit, Joe; I tol you all about it," said Dan, anxious to escape Joe's wrath. "Tom an' me — we go on dat boat. We cross over to hook sum harves' apples. We see dat light way up de reever. We tink we make de cove in de dark, but de light float down wid de current, an ketch us.

Now, what we can do? We row queek — jump on de shore, an make fas' de boat. Den we hide in de bush. When we hear Le Blanc call, we keep still. Den he go off. Dat's de fac', Joe."

While Joe listened, the angry look on his face gradually subsided, and when the story was finished he patted the boys on the shoulder and said:

"Nevaire min', boys, dis time; but hark what I tol you now, be careful — all de time be careful.

"Now, I tol you nudder ting. I git word last night. I no tol you how I git it. Leave dat to me; it's all right. Some more de stuff gon be ober de reever to-night. Now make ready. We gon to fetch it. Jake, you stay on de cove wid de lantern. Danyell, Tomaw, you come wid me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAUVAIS STAR.

The cove was a short, deep cut that intersected the grove; one of the many branches of various lengths whose dark colored waters mingle with the pure blue of the St. Clair.

A deep, dark hedge of alders and willows bordered it, and formed an arch over the pretty creek that tumbled among the stones at the bottom.

When they arrived at the boat, Joe gave his orders in a low voice.

“Now Jake—you gon to keep de lantern dark, till you hear de town clock strike twelve. Den you look up de reever an’ down. When you hear noting, you strike de light and swing him tree time roun’. Den you blow him out. We know by dat you mean everyting’s all right. Den we start. Now Danyell, Tomaw, come wid me.”

He unfastened the boat and stepped in, followed by the two youths.

The boat shot out from the shadows of the willows, and under the propelling power of two pair of oars, was soon dancing on the waves.

A large steamer was bearing down upon them



The Grove.

from the north, while a noisy little tug was just rounding the point below them.

Not a word was spoken, until the sand and gravel of the Canadian beach, grated on the bottom of the boat.

Then, after a whispered consultation, Joe climbed out and disappeared in the darkness, while the two boys remained in the boat.

In about half an hour he returned, carrying a square parcel, which he placed under the seat.

"You hear de bell, boys?" he asked.

"No," said Dan, "we no hear de bell,—we no see de light,—but look Joe! Wat you call dat? Look out in de west. He look like a streak of fire."

Joe threw back his head and looked for a short time, before he spoke.

Across the river, just above the dark line where the tree tops met the western sky, was the blazing star, with his long fiery tail spread out like a fan.

"Dat," said he, at last lowering his head, "dat's de *mauvais*—de bad star. You never hear de story 'bout dat?"

"No," said Dan, "I never hear it. Tol us Joe while we wait."

"All right," said he, "I tol you de story like me fader tol me long time ago, when I was leetle *garcon*."

"He say de sun an' moon am foder an' mudder to de star. De star cheeldren fear de fader, he so beeg, an' shine so bright. When he wake up an' walk on de sky, an' make all de light, den de star cheeldren stay close on de shade wid de mudder.

"One time one leetle star, he tink it's 'bout time he shake de mudder, an' do like de fader do. Boys git dat way sometime. Hey, Tomaw? So he come out an' slide along behin' de fader sun, an' make up hes min' he's gon have a good time.

"But bimeby de fader sun turn roun' an' see him. Den hees beeg eye come like fire, he so mad, an' de spark fly an' light on dat poor leetle star an' set him all in a blaze.

"He fly an' fly to git far away from de fader sun, an' de blaze stretch out long way behin' him.

"Ever since dat day, he fly an' fly, all de time; sometime far off in de dark, den again he git home-sick, an' come near de mudder moon an' de star cheeldren; but he never look on his fader's face agin."

The boys' eyes wandered from Joe's face to the star, and back again, until the story was finished.

Then they took their places in the boat, ready to start at the first flash of the signal light.

The broad river hurried on, as if anxious to mix its waters with the parent sea.

Here and there a frisky fish would throw himself

bodily from the water, and disappear again with a splash.

A large schooner was gliding along with its great snowy sails spread out to catch the breeze, as it tacked and turned in its zig-zag course, up the river. An occasional whistle in the distance announced the approach of a steamer from the great city.

Sounds multiply and time lags in the stillness of the night, and an uneasy feeling began to creep through the minds of the watchers.

Joe paced back and forth on the beach, muttering to himself. At length he stopped in front of the boat and said:

"Boys, wat you tink? May be ole Jake's gon back on us to-night. Hey! Danyell?"

"No! no! Joe. Ole Jake's all right," said Dan, emphatically. "He know what for he don' make de light. May be he go up on de grove an' see dat little gal, den he no hear de bell."

"May be," said Joe, shaking his head. "He make fool of himself 'bout dat little gal. When he come by her, he forgit all 'bout his beezness; den when he leave her, he talk 'bout her all de time. I gon tol him he mus' ten' his beezness better."

Just at this point in Joe's grumbling, the distant bell rang out twelve strokes for midnight.

As the echoes of the last tone died away, three

curved flashes of light were seen on the opposite shore.

“Now Joe, wat you tink 'bout Jake?” said Dan, as they launched the boat and started on the return trip.

“I tink I make meestake dat time, Danyell.”

CHAPTER V.

MARFA.

A coarse plaid shawl was spread out on the grass, in a little alcove formed by a cluster of blossoming thorn bushes, and red fruited sumac.

A slender girl was seated on the shawl with an open book before her.

The bushes cast their wealth of fragrant petals over and around her. They lodged in her hair and eyelashes, and she brushed them impatiently aside.

The whole grove swarmed with flitting songsters, who poured out their sweetest music and fairly shook with an overplus of happiness, all unheeded by the young reader.

A gaunt, homely dog sat on his haunches beside her, looking wistfully into her face and occasionally placing his rough paw on her hand to attract her attention.

Failing in this, he gave a dissatisfied grunt as he sank down by her side and was soon growling and twitching in dreamland.

A little tug, pulling against the current and dragging its load of three or four heavily laden barges, blew its piercing whistle when just opposite

her. She clapped her hands over her ears without raising her eyes from the book.

Leaf after leaf was turned, until a blank page stared her in the face.

She was still struggling in the effort to return to a consciousness of her identity, when a familiar voice sounded in her ear.

"Marfa, don' you know Master Payne's waitin' fer you. He's gwine tol you yer lesson now. Come, hurry up honey. Come quick."

Years have passed since we saw Mumsy—years that have been devoted to the faithful care of the little stranger who came so mysteriously into her humble home.

Constant association with innocent childhood had softened her rough nature, as well as her voice. Her broad face beamed with affection, as she placed her hand on the bowed head.

Marfa closed the book and gazed at her in a dreamy way, as if her thoughts were still between the covers.

Then she slowly arose to her feet, and placing her hand in the large black palm reached out toward her, they went together up the hill, the dog following them.

When Mumsy reached the old house with her charge, she climbed the rickety stairs that led to the library in the second story.

Here she softly rapped and the door was immediately opened as if she had been expected.

"Heah Master Payne, I foun' her at las'. She do git dat stupid like when she hides away by her. sef wiv one of yer books, dat I mos' has ter put my han' on her, 'fore I makes 'er hear."

He quietly smiled when he saw the girl, and taking her by the hand, led her to a pretty chair that stood near a low desk by the window, then promising to accompany her home when the lessons were done, he dismissed Mumsy and closed the door.

It was during one of Mark Payne's visits to his home in the grove, that he first saw the child.

It was several years previous to this time, when, wandering among the trees one day, he heard voices in conversation. Pausing for a moment he became interested.

Through an opening in the bushes, he saw Jake standing in the center of a cleared space, holding the child by the hand. At their feet, stretched out on the grass, was a beautiful fawn gasping for breath. The blood was slowly oozing from a small hole in its side. Its great expressive eyes, over which the filmy glaze of death was slowly settling, were fixed upon the child.

She threw herself upon the grass beside it, and wound her arms around its neck.

"O Mino," she said, "who hurted you? Uncle Jake come and fix him. He's all tored."

She took the innocent face between her hands and looked into the fast dimming eyes; then she stroked the soft ears, and smoothed out the blue ribbon around its neck. Rising to her feet, she tried in vain to lift it to a standing position.

Jake watched her, and brushed away his tears, unobserved by the child.

The slender limbs twitched convulsively; a pitiful bleat of anguish escaped from the pink mouth; the muscles straightened; the nerveless eyelids fell; and the gentle life sped—who dares say where?

The child looked at it a moment, and then whispered softly, "Keep still Uncle Jake, Mino's gone to sleep."

He moved quietly to the trunk of a fallen tree, and then beckoned her to follow him.

She made a gesture of assent, and unfastening her little apron, she spread it over the lifeless form. She then removed her white sunbonnet, and drew it over the face, tucking it carefully behind the ears.

When all was arranged to her satisfaction, she noiselessly seated herself on the log by Jake's side, and whispered, "Let's keep still now Uncle Jake, till he wakes up."

His face wore a sad look and his voice trembled when he said, "Don' you know honey, Mino ain't

gwine open dem purty eyes agin. He's dead honey, 'deed he is."

"What's that Uncle Jake? What is dead?" said the child wonderingly.

He looked at her with a puzzled expression on his face, at a loss for words to express his meaning. He scratched his woolly head, as if to stir up his befogged ideas, and at last said, in a sort of doubtful manner, "Why chile, I reckon its' jes' when de bref goes outen de body."

"But where does it go to, Uncle Jake? And don't it ever come back again?"

Poor Jake. Many a wiser philosopher than he, has been forced to evasion, to escape the searching inquiries of a child.

"Ise gwine tole you honey," and his face brightened, as a happy thought showed him the way through the difficulty, "what de preacher read in de good book, how de Lawd made man outen de dust of de field. Den he breved some of his own bref in him, an' dat give him life, an' he become a livin' soul. Now I spec when he gits ready, he's gwine take dat soul back agin, cos you see honey, dat's part of his own self, an' it can't neber die, but is gwine ter lib on foreber an eber in de bootiful Heben above."

"Did Mino's soul go up there?" said the child, lifting her eyes from the lifeless fawn to the blue vault above.

“I dunno for suah honey, but I spec he don’ hab no soul, Leastwise de good book don’ say nuffin ’bout it. It jes say how de Lawd breaved his bref into man—nuffin ’bout fawns an’ sich like.”

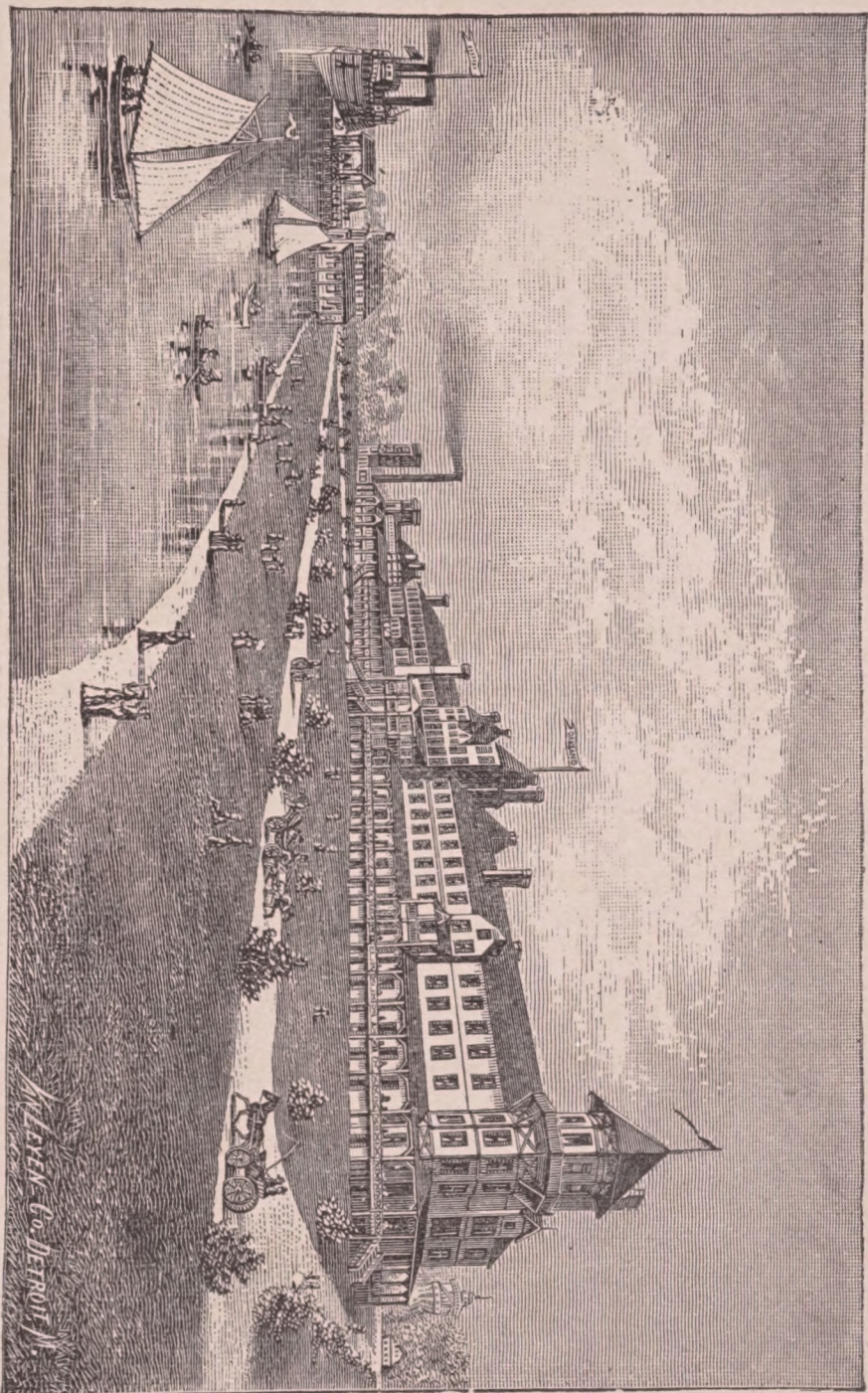
“Who did breathe the breath into Mino, then, and where has it gone?” said the child, beginning to cry as a sense of her loss crept slowly through her mind.

Poor old Jake, having arrived at the summit of his knowledge, could give her no answer. He took her in his arms and began crooning one of his favorite songs; his usual manner of smoothing over the troublesome spots in her life.

De bootiful gates stood wide open,
De bootiful gates above.
A dear little angel went strayin’—
Strayed outside de doorway of love.

On a pretty soft cloud it went sailin’,
It sailed on a cloud of sof’ snow,
From de lan’ where de sun’s eber shinin’,
To dis daik lan’ of trouble below.

The tears dried on the flushed cheeks, the sobs grew less frequent, her head drooped, and rested on his shoulder, and she was soon roaming in the unexplored land of sleep,



The Roomy Verandas of the Great Hotel.

W. L. E. & Co. DETROIT

CHAPTER VI.

REBELLING AGAINST FATE.

Mark Payne had watched the affecting scene unobserved, and when Marfa became quiet, he drew near the log where Jake was seated.

His curiosity was aroused. He had often met the colored pair in his rambles through the grove, but this was his first knowledge of the child's existence.

Although the scene he had just witnessed was proof of the purity of Jake's nature, a feeling of repugnance overcame him when he saw the pink tinted cheek, pressed against the dark face, and the long golden brown locks mingling with the kinky wool.

Jake gave a startled look, and half rose to his feet when Mark Payne began questioning him concerning the child. He hesitated before he answered, but the kind voice and benevolent face of the inquirer, won his confidence, and he told the story from the beginning.

Mark Payne listened attentively, and a queer smile overspread his face, when he heard Jake's theory of the celestial origin of the child. He

pointed to the dead fawn, and Jake explained the affair.

Marfa was passionately fond of pets. Jake had captured the fawn, on one of his hunting expeditions, and brought it home to her. The gentle creature soon learned to love her, and was her constant companion. She was playing in the sand by the river shore, and Jake was mending his boat near by, when they were startled by a shot; and the fawn, uttering a frightened bleat, fell to the ground.

A small boat, going swiftly toward the Canadian shore, was supposed to contain the perpetrators of the cruel deed.

Mark Payne's feelings were touched. The sight of such beauty and innocence, surrounded, as it was, by so fascinating a mystery, made a deep impression on his mind, and he resolved then and there, to make an effort in her behalf. He could hardly interpret his undefined plans when he said:

"Have you made up your mind what you will do with her Jake? You surely don't mean to keep her until she grows up."

"I mean to keep 'er Massa Payne, till de good Lawd calls 'er home agin. I promis' him dat, when he firs' sen' her down, an' Ise gwine keep my word, for shuah."

"Does she attend school?"

"I dun try dat once Massa Payne; I took 'er

down to de ole red school 'ouse, but dem wicked chilluns—dey call 'er bad names. Dey say she aint no 'count, an' aint got no folks only black niggers, an' when she come home cryin,' I jes tol 'er she's gwine stay wid Uncle Jake, an' if de Lawd's gwine want 'er to git de eddication, He's gwine show ole Jake what to do 'bout it."

Great deeds for which we watch and wait,
Oft lie the nearest home.

Wild plans and shapeless resolutions, ran confusedly through the listener's mind. His ardent, romantic nature, was just ripe for any quixotic undertaking. He stood in deep thought for some time. At length he shook himself slightly, and gave a sigh of relief. Looking down on the sleeping child, he said:

"Will you let me teach her?"

Jake was speechless. In his grandest plans for the little one, he had never aspired to such a hight as this. As soon as he could recover his voice he exclaimed:

"O Massa Payne! You aint foolin' is you? You don' mean it for shuah."

"We'll see about it," was the reply, and he disappeared among the trees.

In due time the arrangements were all made and the child was brought to the library each day for the lesson.

Several years had passed, and the course of

study had been faithfully followed, interrupted only by Mark Payne's wanderings, which, for some reason, were growing less and less frequent.

And now let us return to the library, where we left Marfa in her little chair before the desk, near the dormer window.

"Well Girlie," said Mr. Payne,—he could never call her by the odd abbreviation Mumsy had given her,—“and how are the lessons to-day?”

She dropped her head on the desk and remained silent.

He stroked the soft tangle of brown locks, and said:

“Never mind then, A little too hard, were they? Come now, don't cry, and we'll go over them again.”

She lifted her head suddenly, shook back the curls that crept into her eyes, and said rather defiantly:

“No, Master Payne, it was not too hard; but I forgot all about it, till Mumsy called me, and now I'm so sorry.”

He drew a chair by her side and sat down.

“Tell me all about it Girlie.”

She swallowed a rising sob, and twirled the leaves of the book she still held in her hand.

“I took this from the shelf,” she said, “When I was here yesterday. I knew you wouldn't care and I thought I would read a chapter or two this

morning, before I began to study, —and—and—O Master Payne, I read on and on, and it made me so unhappy. The girl in it was just like me. She hadn't any body for her very own. She wasn't any body, and nobody knew who she was. And — and — I wanted to find out if she found out who she was. And so I read on and on, and had just finished when Mumsy called me."

"And did you find out if she found out," he asked, while an amused smile crept over his face.

"O yes!" and her face brightened, "she found her really, truly, father and mother and went to her own real home to live. It made me feel so sad, for I know I'm just like she was, and I'm afraid I'll never know who I am. Uncle Jake says I came down from Heaven, and I believed him when I was younger, but I know better now. And I do want to see my own father and mother. I'm so homesick, Master Payne."

The tears rolled down her cheeks, unheeded. Mr. Payne drew the little pink bordered handkerchief from her pocket, and wiped them away.

"Uncle Jake and Mumsy are kind to me," she continued, "and I love them dearly, but," she hesitated a moment, "you know what I want to say, Master Payne. They are not like you, and I cannot bear to think that things will always be as they are now," and the head went down on the desk again.

Mark Payne heard these first flutterings of an awakening spirit, rebelling against fettered circumstances, and realized how gloomy the outlook was just then.

"Girlie," there was a caressing tone in his voice, "do you remember the motto we had in the lesson the other day?"

"Time rights wrong."

"Be patient and brave. There is one who knows your secret, and He will unfold it in His own good time and way. Cheer up now and we will go over the lesson again."

The book was opened and spread out on the desk, and they were ready to begin, when a low peculiar whistle, which appeared to come from the grove behind the house, attracted his attention.

A strange excited look overspread the girl's face, and when the sound was repeated, she arose and closed the book, saying, as she did so:

"Please, Master Payne, I'd rather go now, and study the lesson at home."

He looked at her curiously for a moment, and a faint suspicion entered his mind.

Was the sound a preconcerted signal? Had she a secret which was not shared with him?

"Impossible," he thought, as he walked by her side to the cabin.

Leaving her at the door, he walked toward the river.

Jake was standing on the high bank of the cove, with a small parcel in his hand, which he slipped in his pocket, when he saw Mr. Payne approaching. Then he began to peel the bark from the tree against which he was leaning.

"What are you doing?" said Mr. Payne.

"I'se jes gwine git some of dis yere slippery elm bark fer Mumsy's cough; its powerful good fer colds," said he, jerking a long strip that clung to the base of a small branch.

"Who was it I heard whistling out here, a short time ago?"

"I dunno what whistlin' you hear. Spec' like it mus' be Marfa's mocking bird, ober dere in de cage, Massa Payne."

Jake's creed, like many another one, was very elastic. When it became necessary, he conformed it to circumstances. Placing a small piece of the bark in his mouth, he made a neat roll of the remainder, and started toward the cabin.

The lessons were a success the following day. When the books were closed, and they were just about to commence a general review of the work, a rap was heard at the door.

"A telegram, sir. Ten cents due," said the boy, as he drew the yellow envelope from his pocket. The silver coin was placed in the outstretched hand, and the door was closed.

Mr. Payne slid his knife carefully through the

end of the envelope, and drew out the slip of paper. A shadow passed over his face as he looked at it.

As the years rolled backward, he was gradually losing the desire for roaming and adventure, and had grown to be almost contented, living this uneventful life of study and dreams, brightened by the daily lessons. And, though he was loth to confess it to himself, those lessons held the secret of the heavy heart that followed the reading of the telegram.

"Business of importance. Come immediately." This was the message.

He looked at it in a sort of dazed way, as if awaking from a dream, and the thought of the great outside world, forced itself between him and the quiet life he had learned to love.

He looked around the room, at the desk by the window with the pile of books upon it, and then his eyes rested on the figure in the little chair. There was a short, sharp struggle between inclination and duty, and then he said, in an assumed cheerful tone:

"Well, Girlie, I am obliged to give you a vacation."

"O, Master Payne. Are you going away again?"

"Please don't. I am so lonesome without the lessons."

Mark Payne gleaned a "crumb of comfort," from the thought that he would be missed.

"I am obliged to go, Girlie, but hope I may not be absent long,"

A great cloud of black smoke moving swiftly down the river, warned him of the approach of the morning steamer.

He gave her the library key, with a few hurried words of advice concerning the lessons, and then he did what he had never thought of doing before. He took the sad face between his hands, and left a warm kiss on the trembling mouth, then he walked out into the great world and left her.

CHAPTER VII.

A FAMILY SKELETON.

The roomy verandas of the great hotel were crowded with the summer guests.

The beautiful river was specked with crafts of all descriptions, from the diminutive yacht, with its scanty crew of two, to the great weather beaten steamer, stained with the brine of the Atlantic.

All eyes were turned to the point on the Canadian shore where the afternoon boat, belching out thick clouds of black smoke, was just coming in sight.

Many were expecting friends, and all were anxious to get a first glimpse of the new arrivals.

When the boat reached the landing there was the usual blowing of whistles, clanking of chains, and ringing of bells. The loop in the great cable was thrown over the pile, and the gang-plank securely fastened.

And then the crowd came rushing and crushing along, carrying baskets and babies, bundles and books, hurrying up the long pier, and overflowing the grounds.

When the landing place was comparatively clear,

a fine team of gray horses, attached to a family carriage, and driven by a coachman in livery, came through the gangway, and pranced along the gravel road that led to the barn. Following them was a distinguished looking party—a middle aged man, a young girl, and a tall slender lady, apparently an invalid, accompanied by her maid.

Their appearance caused a little murmur of excitement among the guests on the verandas. There was much hurrying to and fro among the servants, opening and closing of doors, and excited conversation, while the party was slowly advancing toward the house. That they were "somebody" was unanimously conceded.

Several weeks had passed, and very little information had been obtained concerning the family. The well trained maid and coachman were unapproachable. The register gave the names of Mr. and Mrs. Eastman, daughter and maid, and the curious were forced to accept this intelligence, and await future developments. They made but few acquaintances, and these were unable to solve the mystery that surrounded the family.

Mr. Eastman was a thoughtful stern man, with a bowed head, and drooping shoulders. Like a lightning blasted tree, he bore the mark of some blighting sorrow. He was silent and sad, except when in the presence of his daughter.

Then his countenance beamed with fond pride

and affection, as he listened to her lively chatter, and watched the play of her thoughts and words, on her uplifted face.

Mrs. Eastman was seldom seen by the guests, excepting when passing to and from the carriage for the daily drive.

Her long trailing black robes, and her large mournful eyes full of unshed tears, had gained her the title of the "black robed lady who never smiles."

There were rumors among the servants of a dark robed figure, wandering through the halls and corridors, in the "wee sma' hours," and chanting a wierd song, with a much repeated refrain.

Nervous guests in their wakeful moods, sometimes caught the wailing tones, and heard the rustling of soft skirts as they trailed past the closed doors.

It was afternoon. The river steamer had arrived and departed. The excitement which its arrival had created, was followed by another event of equal importance—the distribution of the daily mail.

Carol Eastman was curled up in a hammock, which hung from the ceiling of the veranda, unconscious of the realities surrounding her, but wide awake to the peculiar fascination of the new novel she was reading.

Her father came around the corner with a loose bundle of letters and newspapers in his hand. He

seated himself in a chair near the hammock, and looked over the parcel.

The shadow of a smile brightened his sad face, as he read the address on a pink tinted envelope, and then placed it on the open book before her.

The book flew over the side of the hammock, and she sprang to her feet, exclaiming as she did so, "O papa! where did you get it?"

Without waiting for a reply, she hastily tore it open, regardless of the many eyes that were watching her, and was soon as deeply interested in the letter as she had been in the book.

Suddenly a little gasp of pleasure was heard, and she exclaimed, "O papa! just think; isn't it lovely? Roe is coming next week."

He smiled as he looked at the illumined face, and she continued, "Wouldn't it be delightful if he were here to attend the hop with me to-night? How happy I should be," and she breathed a sigh of regret, as she slipped the letter in her pocket.

"Those little 'ifs' confront us at all stages of life, my child. Your poor mother has long battled with one. I had hoped that this pure air and beautiful scenery would be a benefit to her, but the doctor tells me she is worse again to-day."

"Poor mamma. How thoughtless I have been. I promised Hannah I would sing to her, and I had forgotten it entirely."

Stooping down she left a kiss on her father's sad

face, and then went swiftly along the veranda and disappeared from his sight, and soon after he heard her voice, low and sweet, singing the soothing Dream Song:

Adown the dim valley,
On slumberland's stream,
Float, weary one, float.
Through the 'wilderer paths
Of thy gossamer dream,
Float, weary one, float.

Floating—dreaming—floating,
Floating on slumber-land's tide.

Where dream-voices whisper,
And dream-hands caress,
Float, weary one, float.
Where dream-angels linger,
Thy slumber to bless,
Float, weary one, float.

Floating—dreaming—floating,
Floating on slumber-land's tide.



St. Clair River with its silver-slippered feet.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE PATH OF DANGER.

It was the night of the hop, The beautiful river stretched out to the right and left, smooth and unruffled.

The full moon was shining in a clear sky, and the long silvery rays brightened into a path of light that reached from shore to shore.

The hotel grounds were handsomely illuminated. Chinese lanterns of various designs hung suspended from the lower branches of the trees.

The colored electric globes hissed and sputtered overhead, flooding the lawn with a wierd blue light, and stamping the black shadows of the shrubbery and branching evergreens deep into the pile of the closely shaven grass.

Fairy music from the band, which was stationed on the upper veranda, floated and quivered through the still clear air.

Gaily dressed women, accompanied by their dark-robed escorts, wandered in and out among the lights and shadows.

Within, the merriment increased as the hours

sped; the whole place was alive and in motion, with riotous pleasure.

The servants, freed for the time from the eyes of their watchful employers, were gathering stray bits of reflected happiness from their various places of concealment.

Even the faithful Hannah,—Mrs. Eastman's trusted maid,—had been tempted from duty by the rippling melodies that had reached her ear.

"Why not me as well as the others?" she muttered to herself. "The missus is fast asleep, and she's that tired with the worriment of the day that she'll not be wakin' for a time, I'm thinkin'."

Mr. Eastman had wandered through the house and grounds until he wearied of the scene.

Leaving Carol with friends, he found a secluded seat near the shore.

The ripples that splashed monotonously against the low buildings near him failed to lull his unquiet thoughts. His soul was rebelling against the bitterness of fate that held him securely in bonds that could not be broken.

His shadowed face brightened when Carol left the crowd, as she often did, to whisper of some little incident, or stroke his hair lightly while she bent down and left a kiss on his wrinkled forehead.

How like a pretty picture she looked, with her cheeks flushed and her eyes flashing. She wore a pale pink dress of some soft floating material, artis-

tically fashioned and draped around her graceful form. A flower fan, made of the golden-eyed Marguerites, hung from a ribbon at her belt—the only decoration in her simple toilet.

A hoarse whistle drew their attention to a great black steamer just opposite the little city. She was sunken to her bulwarks with the weight of the iron ore which she had brought from the land of the “Gitchee Gumee.”

The subdued, smothered sound of the throbbing machinery, was like the regular beating of a great pulsing heart, giving life to the shrieking monster.

She cut her way through the silvery path that stretched across the river, and the foaming waters rushed shoreward, as if angry at being disturbed.

Suddenly a short, sharp, warning whistle was sounded; loud, excited voices were heard, and the throbbing machinery was silenced,

The crew were gathered in the bow of the steamer, which now floated along with the current. Again the danger signal was sounded.

By this time the merry revelers were hurrying excitedly to the shore.

“Look,” some one exclaimed, “there’s a small boat directly in front of the steamer.”

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated, and a thrill of horror passed through the crowd, when they saw a single figure sitting in the stern, awkwardly managing the boat with a paddle, and

apparently unconscious of the dangerous situation.

"Doomed," was the general opinion of the horrified spectators, when they saw the figure sway and then drop the paddle in the water and sink to the bottom of the boat.

Just when all hope had vanished, another boat coming swiftly from the opposite shore, cut through the foaming water in front of the bow of the steamer.

A few dexterous strokes of the oar,—the relieved lookers-on could hardly realize how it was done,—and the two boats were side by side, rushing from the path of danger and nearing the shore.

Mr. Eastman and Carol followed the excited crowd to the landing place, where the two boats were drawn out of the water by willing hands.

They saw a little bent man, with a shock of grey hair, and a long grizzled beard, rise from the seat and step over the side. His sharp glittering eyes wandered over the crowd a moment before he spoke.

"Pritty close shave dat, eh? I tink one time I gon fin' de bottom myself. Dat 'ooman mus' be crazy, when she go on dat boat all 'lone."

At the word "woman," Mr. Eastman pushed his way excitedly through the crowd followed by his daughter.

He bent over the prostrate form, and lifted the long black hair from the face which it concealed.

"O my God!" he moaned. Carol climbed into

the boat, sat down on the low seat and raised the drooping head in her lap,

“Poor dear Mamma,” she sobbed, and her tears fell on the limp hand which she stroked and kissed alternately.

Mr. Eastman seemed deprived of the power of speech or motion for the time.

The rescuer was unconcerned, and in a most matter-of-fact manner, drew a tin tobacco box from his pocket, and rolling a generous part of its contents into a round ball tucked it in his mouth, as if to reward himself for his bravery.

Just then a voice was heard,

“Leave me go to my Missus,” and the regretful Hannah elbowed her way to the boats.

The sound of her voice aroused Mr. Eastman to a sense of the situation.

Bidding the little Frenchman follow him, he raised the unconscious form from the bottom of the boat, and with Hannah’s assistance bore her to the house.

When French Joe was again seated in his boat, a satisfied smile brightened his wrinkled face, as he bit the yellow coins, one by one, to test their purity before dropping them into his greasy wallet.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STORM.

The span of grays stood at the hotel entrance impatiently pawing the gravel under their feet.

The liveried coachman sat erect, with the reins in his white gloved hands, awaiting his passengers.

The loungers on the verandas gazed at them curiously when they came slowly down the steps.

It was Mrs. Eastman's first appearance since the night of her perilous adventure and timely rescue.

The mystery was deepening, and the family's movements were becoming decidedly interesting, as no explanations had been given, and all allusions to the affair had been frowned down.

The spirited horses were soon dashing along the wide, smooth street that reached from end to end of the beautiful little city, on through the shady grove and out into the open country. The broad fields of uncut hay and grain rose and sank in long billowy waves, as the warm south wind swept over them,

The road stretched along, playing hide and seek with the river, past the many weather-beaten farm-houses, which were half hid among the ancient apple orchards.

On and on they went, never heeding the darkening sky, or the low rumbling of the approaching storm.

At last the horses halted at the foot of a steep sand hill, pricked up their ears and neighed uneasily, as if they scented danger in the air.

Mr. Eastman alighted and looked in astonishment at the scene. One of those sudden changes for which the lake region is noted had covered the blue sky with a moving mass of angry clouds, borne along by a fierce west wind. A touch of iciness in the air contrasted sharply with the balmy breeze that had fanned them an hour before.

"How far are we from the hotel, Mike?" he asked, anxiously.

"Indade an' I could not say for shure, sir, but at the laste it's eight or nine miles, I'm thinkin'."

"We cannot escape the storm," he said, turning to Carol, "but we must try and reach shelter of some kind. Turn around, Mike, and hurry homeward as fast as possible. Remember your mistress is here."

"Shure an' I'm well aware of that, sor, an' I'll do the best I can."

The long whip played around the horses' ears, and the sparks flew from their flying feet as they rushed along over the stony road.

Mr. Eastman busied himself in quieting the nervous invalid, while Carol watched the blazing

skies. The wild scene fascinated her, and she leaned far out of the carriage window, to look at the long zig-zag streaks reaching down like fiery fingers among the tall tree-tops.

The storm overtook them at last—a mingled torrent of hail and rain.

Poor Mike could hardly see to manage the now thoroughly frightened horses, as they reared and plunged along amid the deafening racket. He did his best, however, at the same time watching for the picnic pavilion that stood by the side of the road.

At length he could see, away in the distance, the dark outlines of the building, and plying the whip vigorously, they were soon under the welcome shelter.

Mike climbed down from his lofty seat, and patted the trembling, dripping horses.

A low, rustling sound, coming from a dark corner, attracted Mr. Eastman's attention, and stepping from the carriage, he whispered, "Light the lamps, Mike."

The rays spread out through the thick mist, and gradually brought to their sight a dark object on a bench near them.

"Phat are ye's doin' there?" said Mike, at the same time backing slowly toward the horses.

"O, Mon Dieu! Sacre!" was the answer, and French Joe arose from the seat, his teeth chattering,

and his knees trembling. There was a wild, frightened look in his eyes, as they peered out from under his brush-like eyebrows, that was altogether unnatural.

"What is the trouble here, my good man?" said Mr. Eastman, recognizing him instantly.

"Everyting's all right now, Meester," said Joe, shrugging his shoulders, "but I git beeg scare when I hear dem horse come on de shed. I tink for sure I gon see de ghost."

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Eastman, in a low voice, glancing uneasily at the carriage.

"Don't you never hear 'bout de ghost, Meester, what come on de tunderstorm, an' drive de leetle sorrel ponies down dis hill?"

Mr. Eastman shook his head, and gave his attention to the occupants of the carriage, while Mike, making a pretense of arranging some part of the harness, jerked one of the straps and said, impatiently:

"Phat are ye's givin' us?"

"Maybe you call dat foolishness, but never min'; I tink you fin' out for yourself pritty soon."

The hail storm had passed by, but the rain was still falling in waves, and the thunder followed the flashes of light in a continuous roar.

Mr. Eastman left the carriage, and beckoning to the Frenchman, led the way to a far corner of the shed.

"Now tell me what you mean, my good fellow, but be careful and speak low,"

"All right. I tol you someting, den maybe you see someting for yourself, den you believe what I tol you. I never see it myself, but I hear 'bout it many time. Dat's a long story 'bout de ghost what drive de ponies. I tol you, if you want to hear it."

Mr. Eastman felt the pressure of a little hand on his arm,

"Mamma is sleeping now, papa. Please let him tell the story. It is just a delightful time to hear it; besides, it will be rare fun to watch Mike's face; he's so superstitious."

She stood just in the path of the long smoky rays of light, her face beaming with merriment and expectancy.

He drew her to his side, and a proud smile overspread his features.

"You may tell the story," said he. "My daughter would like to hear it."

"All right, meester; I tol you."

CHAPTER X.

THE GHOST.

“Dat’s good many years ago, when de bush come close on de shore, an’ everyting roun’ here’s all wild. De deer an’ turkey feed on dis hill, an’ nobody scare ’em.

“Bimeby dere come a Englishman wid plenty money, an’ buy beeg section of lan’. All dis hill come on dat section.

“You no can see it now, but on de day-time you fin’ dat’s curi’s hill—it go down an’ down like a stair from de road to de river.

“Den he make him a house. I tell you what, dat’s nice house. Sometime when you go on de road, maybe you see it. It’s no good now. It’s all spile wid de sun an’ de rain,—but when he first make it—I tell you dat’s fine.

“Den he bring his wife home. Everybody like ’er but nobody like dat man. He feel too beeg an proud.

“He keep one ole black man what take care of de ponies. Nobody else come on de place.

“When he live here ten or eight year, he begin to drink pretty hard. He git worse an’ worse, till

bimeby he stay on de salloon in de town mos' all de time, drinkin' an' drinkin' all day an sometime half de night,

"Den somebody put him on de wagon, an' de ponies start for home.

"I tell you what Meester, dere's music along dat road den. He holler an' yell, an' trash dem poor little sorrel ponies wid de butt en' of de whip, till he wake up everybody what live aroun' dere, an' dey run out door to see what de matter is.

"But bimeby dey get used to dat, an' dey jes turn over in bed an' say:

'O, dat's nothin' only ole Parker on a spree.'

"Well he go on like dat for a while, an' den he give up; an' one night de time come when he's gon die.

"I tink dat night mus' be someting like 'tis now. Dey say dat was a terrible storm. De lightnin' come down an' strip de bark from de trees an' set 'em afire, an de tunder shake de groun'

"Now what you tink dat ole man do?

"He make dat poor woman open every door an' winder in de house. He say he like to see de lightnin' play.

"An den he lay dere on his back, in de bed, an' yell an' holler, an curse an' swear, like he try to make more nise dan de tunder could,

"De black man, he git scare, an' hide himself in de cellar, an' leave dat woman all 'lone.

"Well, dat ole man keep it up till sunrise, an den he die. I guess maybe she mus' be glad den.

"But what you tink? She don't git done wid him yit.

"He make on his will sumting what's curi's. He say she's gon dig a hole in de side of de hill, an' make a little house of tick plank. Maybe when 'taint so dark, you see de place. Dat's right over dar."

Joe had reached this point in the story when he was interrupted by a simultaneous flash and crash, which was followed by long tongues of fire twisting among the branches of a tall walnut tree that stood near the building.

Carol clasped her father's arm with both hands, and hid her face on his shoulder; she forgot to watch Mike, who was doing his best to sooth the frightened horses.

Joe clapped his hands over his eyes for a moment and then continued the story with a trembling voice.

"I tink you see de spot easy 'nuff now. Dat walnut tree stan's close on de place.

"Well dat woman she git de little house build, den dey shove 'im in, an' lock de door.

"But you tink he's gon stay dere, meester? I guess not. Dat place no hol' 'im. Dat's too small.

"Pritty soon after dat, de little sorrels dey git lonesome, an' dey die, too.

"Den somebody begin talk about de ghos'; an' bimeby dere come so much talk, de folks say dat won't do.

"So dey take de ole man an' put 'im on de graveyard, an' pull de little house down, an' fill up de hole.

"You tink de ghos' leave de place? No, sir-ee!

"But pritty soon he git company. I can't tol you how he do it, but he git dem little ponies agin.

"An' now folks say, every time a big tunder storm come from de west, he come 'long wid it, an' when he reach de top of de hill, he begin to holler an' yell, an' trash de little ponies wid de butt en' of de whip, jes' like when he's 'live."

Another heavy peal and blinding flash interrupted the story-teller, and high above the din arose an unearthly and indescribable sound, accompanying the noise of breaking bushes, and the uneven tread of some animal racing down the terraced hill toward the river.

Carol again hid her face on her father's shoulder, and Joe stuffed his fingers in his ears and sank in a shivering heap on the bench, while Mike struggled with the frightened horses.

Not a word was spoken until the thunder was heard rumbling away over the Canadian tree-tops.

"Papa," whispered Carol, without raising her head, "let us go home."

He led her to the carriage, and looking at the quiet figure asleep upon the cushions, said:

"Stay with your mother, my child, for a few moments."

Then he went outside of the building. He saw the narrow moon in the clear blue western sky, while the heavy black clouds hung low down over the river in the east.

The rain drops on the dripping bushes twinkled in the rays of the burning tree.

Joe ventured a peep, then straightened himself up and followed Mr. Eastman.

"What you tink now, meester, 'bout de ghos'?"

"Wait a few minutes and I will tell you," as a sound of breaking bushes and the tramping of feet, which seemed to come from the direction of the river, reached their ears.

The bushes swayed back and forth as the spectre advanced toward them.

Suddenly that terrible sound broke the silence, and Mr. Eastman's hearty laugh joined in the chorus.

Carol rushed out, with Mike following close behind her.

And there stood the dreaded ghost—a poor little blonde donkey, with the water dripping from his long ears and shaggy sides.

He looked stupidly at the group for a moment,

in a listless, dejected manner, and then disappeared among the bushes again.

“What do you think about the ghost now, my good man?” said Mr. Eastman, turning to Joe.

He scratched his head and shook it doubtfully.

“I tink, meester —, I guess I don’ no what I tink.”

Mr. Eastman smiled at the queer reply, and said:

“Back out your horses now, Mike.”

“I’ll do that, sir. Begorra, an’ it’s quare ghosts ye have in this counthry, I’m thinkin’.”

CHAPTER XI.

ROE MASON'S ARRIVAL.

It was midsummer, and the air was quivering with the intense heat.

The journey had been long and tedious, and when Roe Mason stepped from the cars and followed the crowd to the landing place of the up-river steamer, he was both cross and tired.

But the refreshing breeze that rimpled the beautiful river brought new life and energy, and he found a comfortable seat in the bow of the boat, just as the starting signal sounded.

He watched the foaming waters divide and recede as the steamer cut her way through them, throbbing and trembling in a very human-like way.

The great noisy city and the beautiful green island park gradually disappeared in the misty distance, and then he passed out into that circular-shaped lake which Father Louis Hennepin baptized as Lac Ste. Claire.

Then the two long misty lines drew near each other again, and the great marshes spread out like a green carpet around him.

The stately rushes bowed and nodded as if wish-

ing him "bon-voyage," and in some places almost brushed the sides of the boat.

The broad stretch of marsh, veined with creeks and channels, seemed almost endless.

At last this great wilderness of space narrowed, and he was soon hemmed in by the banks of the St Clair river,

The beautiful St. Clair, with its "silver slippered-feet,—over whose pure glassy waters so many generations have glided—under whose cruel waves so many souls have solved the mystery.

Halting at the many little cities that dot the shore, where the whole population, apparently, came rushing down to the wharf to welcome the steamer; the trip was enlivened by a continual succession of surprises and incidents.

At last he saw, away in the distance, the magnificent hotel outlined against the blue sky.

And now, while the steamer is nearing the beautiful grounds, go with me to the southern city, which Roe Mason calls home, and learn who he is, and why his face wears that pleased look when he sees the hotel in the distance.

A door opening on the principal street bore a respectable sign in black and gold:

.....
R. MASON & SON.
.....

was the inscription.

Here, as junior member of the famous law firm,

Roe Mason had taken his seat on graduating from a northern law school.

Some two or three years before his trip northward, a complicated case involving many clients and much wealth, was dragging through the courts. Mr. Eastman was an interested party, and Mason & Son managed his interests.

One day when he was consulting them on some matter regarding the business, a faint rap at the inner office door interrupted them. An annoyed frown overspread Roe Mason's face.

"Confound that boy," he said, "I told him we were not to be disturbed."

But when he opened the door and saw the pretty up-turned face smiling through the glistening tears, he forgot his annoyance; and when he heard the sweet voice say:

"Please, Mr. Mason, is papa here?" he threw the door wide open and invited her to enter.

She went across the room where Mr. Eastman was sitting, and putting her arms around his neck, she said something in a low tone which strangely agitated him.

He arose and taking her by the hand went out; and it was many years before Roe Mason learned what it all meant.

This incident was the beginning of an acquaintance which had passed through the usual gradations

and ended in the betrothal of Roe Mason and Carol Eastman.

His face wore an expectant look when the whistle sounded and they reached the landing place.

The boat crashed against the pier with a force which nearly threw the waiting passengers from their feet.

Roe Mason, looking over the heads of those nearest him, saw a slender white robed-figure in the distance which he recognized.

He was the first to leave the boat, and regardless of the opinion of the curious spectators who crowded the wharf, he rushed up the walk and grasped her hand before his fellow-passengers hardly realized that they were at their journey's end.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ELUSIVE FACE.

When Roe Mason awoke the next morning the sun was just peeping over the tree tops that stretched along behind the Canadian village on the opposite shore.

After a hurried breakfast he launched one of the trim little fishing boats, and well supplied with all the necessaries for a few hours' sport, started up the river.

The little city, nestled at the foot of the low hill that nearly surrounds it, was silent.

The black water of the narrow river came rolling lazily out from under the bridge and mingled with the blue of the St. Clair.

Away in the distance the grove point reached out and hid the river scenery.

He followed the shore around the point and then rowed out to a diminutive tug, which was struggling bravely with her tow of three or four great barges against the swift current.

A rope was thrown from the last one which he fastened to the bow of his boat. When he arrived opposite the island, he unfastened the line and

started on the downward trip, floating with the current.

His lines were cast out into the deep water, and the sport began in real earnest. The silver-blue whitefish and green tinted bass were led on by the tempting bait and skillfully landed in the bottom of the boat.

The sun was nearly over his head when he drew near the grove point again.

The little brook came dancing out from the shady cove; the trees interlaced overhead, and the spot looked so cool and tempting after his unusual exertion and protracted sun bath, that he turned the boat toward the entrance and ran the bow into the bank,

A comfortable rustic seat was fastened to the trunk of a large tree near him.

He looked around among the bushes, and seeing no one, he stretched himself out on the seat, and was soon a captive to sleep and weariness.

His penetrating eyes had failed to notice a movement, a mere trembling of a bunch of hawthorn bushes that grew on the opposite bank of the cove.

When his loud breathing told of his deep sleep, the branches were shoved aside, and a fair young face peeped out from the opening. The eyes were brimming with mischief as she watched the unconscious sleeper.

A great blue fly was buzzing around his head and now and then alighting on his nose or lips.

His comical efforts to rid himself of the torment were highly amusing to the spectator.

He tossed his arms aimlessly about, occasionally bringing his open palm down on the spot just as

“The frisky fly
With feet of fuzz,
Sailed swiftly by
With mocking buzz.”

At last becoming thoroughly aroused by his own exertions, he sprang to his feet, and bringing his two palms together with a quick movement, he caught the saucy plague.

A satisfied expression drove the look of annoyance from his face as he tossed his conquered enemy in the water.

He raised his eyes and caught sight of the merry face just as it disappeared behind the bushes.

“Carol,” he called, but receiving no reply he jumped into the boat and turned it toward the opposite bank.

A few hasty steps brought him to the clump of bushes where he expected to find her.

He was somewhat startled when he saw a great shaggy dog stretched out on the grass, lazily snapping at the hungry flies.

He looked around among the alders and behind the great tree trunks, expecting every moment to hear Carol’s merry laugh, but he looked in vain.

At last he reluctantly gave up the search and stood a moment in doubt as to what his next move should be. Then he suddenly started up the hill, following the path that led to the road, as his thoughts wandered in a new direction.

Perhaps she had been riding along the road and caught sight of him as he entered the cove.

"The tantalizing mischief," he muttered. "She's as provoking as the fly."

He climbed the fence and looked up and down the long stretch of road, but no carriage was in sight.

Nothing but a little old milkman, who was jogging along, seated among his rattling cans, chirruping to the rickety horse that drew the rickety cart.

It was no great task to check the speed of the animal when Roe Mason spoke.

"Have you seen anything of a carriage along the road since you left town?"

"Nary a carriage nor anything else, sir. You're the fust livin' creeter I've seen since I left my last customer."

Roe Mason was completely mystified. He wondered if he could have been mistaken in the face. It seemed almost impossible, when every feature of his promised bride was so familiar to him.

They were the same sparkling eyes, the same merry, mischievous expression, and the same mass of wavy brown hair framing the fair young face.

No, there was no uncertainty about it. It was Carol, beyond a doubt. But why was she here, and how could he account for her mysterious disappearance?

And now the story of the haunted hill, which she had related to him the night before, became strangely blended with his perplexing thoughts.

Was he bewitched? Could the face have been an illusion?

He laughed uneasily, as he brushed the uncanny thoughts from his mind, and returning to the boat, he took the oars, and started down the river on his way to the hotel.

He hurried along the path that led from the boat-house, rushed up the veranda steps, and turned a corner.

What was this? A hammock idly swinging back and forth, propelled by a slippered foot that peeped out from the folds and ruffles of the gauzy skirts. The familiar head was bent low over the mid-summer number of a popular magazine, and he drew near without disturbing her.

"Carol," he exclaimed, in an excited tone.

She looked wonderingly,—his tone and manner were new to her.

"You startled me, Roe," and she arose from the hammock and shook out her skirts.

"How long have you been home?" he asked, all

sorts of doubts and suspicions running riot in his mind.

“Home, Roe,—what do you mean?”

She became more and more surprised when she looked in his face and saw the strange expression.

“How innocent,” he said.

A little lump rose in her throat at first, and she felt half inclined to cry.

His voice had a tone of sarcasm and harshness in it which she thought altogether unnecessary. He needn't be so cross, she thought; and she gave her head a little toss, and swallowed the threatened sobs. And while a forced smile lighted her eyes, she curved her pretty lips in a becoming pout that only served to confirm his suspicions.

He hardly knew what they were himself, and he hesitated a moment and looked at her, as she stood there apparently so unconcerned before he spoke.

“Were you out riding this morning?”

His voice was somewhat softened, but he watched her closely, while he awaited her answer.

She gave her head a provoking toss, and slid her foot back and forth over the short grass.

“Yes, sir; I believe I was.” The words were snipped off, and she pursed her lips in a very pettish way.

“Will you tell me in what direction you went?”

“Let me think a moment,” and the engagement ring sparkled when she drew her hand across her

forehead, as if to refresh her memory, "it was either south or west, I'm not just sure which. Papa and I took a boat and rowed down to the farther side of the lawn and back again. It was such a lovely morning, you know."

He looked at her in surprise. He had thought he understood her nature thoroughly, but he was forced to confess to himself that she puzzled him now.

He looked out over the river and recalled the scene—his deep sleep, the annoying fly, and his gradual awakening, with the one glimpse of the face. Was it possible that it might have been a part of some sweet dream, that floated away on his awakening?

Carol had again taken her seat in the hammock, and lifted her eyes lazily from the book, when he sat down in the chair beside her. He took the book in his hand and idly toyed with the jagged leaves, while she tilted her head on one side, and hummed a favorite air.

When he spoke his voice was natural again. The harshness and sarcasm were gone.

"Carol, forgive me; I think I must have been dreaming," and he told her the story of the elusive face.

CHAPTER XIII.

KISMET.

Roe Mason mounted his favorite saddle horse one morning, about a week after the eventful fishing excursion.

He threw his portfolio over his shoulder, waved his hand gaily at the group on the veranda, and whispering some choice love bit in Carol's ear, as he bent down and straightened the stirrup strap, he galloped away.

Leaving the little city behind him, he followed the familiar road through the grove, and out into the open country.

He was thoroughly satisfied with the world and himself that morning.

Carol had teased and tantalized him about his dream, until he wished he had never mentioned it.

It was one of those rare summer days, when the heavens and the earth seem drawn toward each other, and the air trembles with the action of the opposing forces.

When one who lives "near to nature's heart," revels in the purity of the atmosphere.



The mearest flower that grows close to thoughts
That too often lie too deep for tears.

Van Neden

"Near to nature's heart."

Roe Mason—poet, artist and musician, drank the harmonies unconsciously.

He rode on until he could see, in the distance, the two cities, with the blue waters of Lake Huron rushing down over the rapids between them.

He drew out his watch and was astonished when he realized how far he must have come.

“I promised Carol a sketch of the pavilion,” he said to himself. “I must have left it miles behind me.”

He turned around and rode slowly along, stopping now and then to outline the pretty bits of wood and water, that make the ride so picturesque.

At last he reached the ghostly hill, and dismounting, he led his horse through an opening in the fence, slipped the bridle from the animal's head, and left him to roam among the tall red clover blossoms that grew in profusion.

The hill sloped to the river in a succession of natural terraces, which were covered with a thick growth of large forest trees, skirted with clumps of waxy hawthorn bushes, and blossoming alders.

Looking down on the pavilion which stood on one of the terraces, he selected a spot which gave a fine view for the sketch.

He swung himself down the perpendicular earth wall, by the help of a wild-grape vine which hung from one of the trees, and stood by the blackened trunk of the lightning-blasted tree.

"Just the place," he said, and he soon became wholly absorbed in his work.

He was giving the final strokes to the sketch, when a slight commotion among the bushes drew his attention, and soon a shaggy little donkey forced his way through, and began nibbling at the stubby thistles that grew around a low stump.

Roe Mason smiled and said to himself, "Just in time," and when the sketch was finished, the little donkey with his long dangling ears and stupid face, was prominent in the foreground.

A low whistle brought the intelligent horse to his side, and he was soon on his way home again. But a weather-beaten farm-house, with its background of crooked apple trees, and the skeleton windmill towering at one side, tempted him.

The little old milkman, whom he had seen the week before, was crossing the road with a shining tin can in each hand, filled with warm foaming milk.

Roe Mason halted, and asked permission to sketch the house.

"Hey," said the old man, lowering the cans to the ground, and placing his open hand behind his ear to hold the sound.

The request was repeated in a louder tone of voice.

"Why, certingly, certingly, but what in tarnation you can see round here to make a picter outen, is more 'n I can tell. But hold on, stranger, won't

you come in an' have a bite first? You look kinder tuckered out. A good bowl of warm bread an' milk 'll brace you up all right. I'm jest agoin' to try some myself, before I start out with my load."

Roe took a rapid inventory of his stomach's necessities. His dinner hour had long since passed by, and now that he was reminded of it, he realized that he was hungry, and thankfully accepted the old man's hospitality.

"Turn your hoss loose an' let him feed around in the yard. The ole woman will have the table sot agin we git in there. Mebbe you'd like to wash up a bit first. A feller's apt to git dusty an' gritty like this time o' year," and he led the way to a wooden bench which was just outside the kitchen door.

Here, Datie," he called, through an open window, "here's yer milk," and a pair of plump hands reached through the opening and drew the buckets inside.

The tin wash-basin was filled with fresh water from the trough under the windmill, and the old man sousled his head and face, with much unnecessary sputtering and noise, while his guest was removing his hat and coat.

A long roller towel, fastened to the back of the woodshed door, did duty for both.

"Come on, now, stranger, an' we'll see what the ole woman's got fer us."

A tall, black eyed, rosy cheeked woman came through an open door as they entered the kitchen.

"Datie, this 'ere stranger's hungry. Can you give him a bowl of bread and milk?" and the old man nudged his guest, as he pointed to the already prepared lunch on the kitchen table.

"He is welcome, John, to what little we have. I saw him coming, and put on an extra bowl," said the woman, in a cheery voice, at the same time placing two splint-bottom chairs opposite the bowls.

"I knowed 'twould be all right when I asked him to come in. Set to, now stranger, an' don't be bashful."

And when Roe Mason drew the chair up to the table and sat down before the tempting spread, he mentally stored the picture among his material for future use.

The long, thin slices of spongy bread were criss-crossed on the small blue and white platter. A glass dish held the small shell-shaped pats of butter, and a four-storied section of honey was dripping its sweetness on a china plate. The two large china bowls were filled with the foaming milk. In the center, giving color to the picture, was a long-necked vase, filled with pale green asparagus boughs, and drooping meadow lilies.

When the simple meal was finished, Roe Mason wondered why it had tasted so good; and it pleased the old man wonderfully when he told him that it

was the best meal he had eaten since the hungry days of boyhood.

The kind woman gave him a cordial invitation to repeat his visit when convenient; and after watching the old man climb into his cart and drive away with his load, he finished the sketch and mounted his horse, well satisfied with his day's work.

The sun, draped in a rosy mist, was hovering above the tree-tops on the western side of the road.

He stopped in front of the old ruined house in the grove and uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, while his face lighted with enthusiasm.

The sun threw the moving shadows of the tall trees on the roof. The projecting gables were fringed with the woodbine which crawled out and in the crevices between the shrunken boards, crept upon the roof, and even peeped down the dingy chimney.

He followed the lines with his practiced eye until he reached the highest gable.

Just under this was a pretty dormer window, the upper half covered with the green vines.

Some moving object behind the glass attracted his attention.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "am I dreaming again?"

He rubbed his eyes and looked at the window carefully.

It was Carol.

She appeared to be gazing earnestly at some object on the river, and he doubted that she saw him.

He sprang from the horse and fastened it to a projecting rail in the fence. He was wide awake now, and thoroughly in earnest.

He opened the rude gate and hurried up the grass-grown path that led to the door. It trembled with age when he rapped on it with his knuckles.

He waited a moment, and then repeated the operation more forcibly.

Nothing but the hollow echoes resounding through the empty rooms reached his ears.

He shook the door impatiently, and was half tempted to break it down with his foot.

Then he turned and walked along the path to get another view of the window, but the face was not there.

He rushed around the house, peering among the vines, and searching for some possible door or window where she might have escaped.

He found nothing but the great wall of rough boards, covered with the green drapery.

He tried the door once more, and then turned reluctantly away, loath to leave the spot with the mystery unsolved.

His horse gave him a little neigh of welcome as he came out through the gate. He looked up and

down the road as he had done once before, and it struck him as a remarkable coincidence when he saw the old milkman again, with his load of rattling cans.

"Hello! here we are agin," sounded the familiar voice. "How did you come on with the picter? But what in tarnation ails ye? You look as if you mought have seen a ghost."

Roe Mason's attempt to appear natural was a dismal failure. He mounted his horse, and, pointing carelessly toward the old house, said:

"Who owns that place?"

"Wal some says one thing, an' some says another. But I kinder reckon it belongs to a feller named Payne. Mark Payne's his full name, I believe."

"Does he live there?" and Roe Mason tried in vain to suppress the eagerness in his voice.

"Wal, yes, when he's to hum, but that ain't very offen now-a-days. You see he's one of them are rovin' sort o' chaps, what can't be contented nowhere. He's gone sometimes for a year or so, an' then he's here for a spell. Off an' on like."

Roe Mason drew his fingers through the horse's mane, and looked away toward the river, before asking the next question.

"Is he home now?"

"Wal I can't say for sartin; as likely 's not he is, but I ain't seen nothin' of him."

Roe Mason reined the horse into the road.

"Hain't goin, are ye? Call in when you're passin' some time."

"Thanks," was the answer, as the horse started on a gallop.

"I wonder what in thunderation ails him," said the old man, looking after him. "He seemed a likely enough chap till now. Can't be as he's been drinkin'. Git up, Ned," and he jogged along homeward, wondering what Datie would say, when he told her of their guest's queer behavior.

CHAPTER XIV

PARTED.

"I went to dig a grave for love,
But the earth was so stiff and cold;
That tho' I strove thro' the bitter night,
I could not break the mold.

"And I said, 'Must he lie in my house in state?
And stay in his wonted place?
Must I have him with me another day,
With that awful change in his face'?"

"O, let me see the sketch," cried Carol, running down the steps when she saw him. "Why are you so late? I've been watching and waiting for the last half hour, and I thought you would never come."

He drew the sketch from his port-folio and reached it out toward her without speaking, but in her eagerness to get a glimpse of it, she failed to notice his manner.

"O, Roe," she exclaimed, "isn't it lovely? and the cute little donkey, too. How did you manage to get him?"

Receiving no answer, she raised her eyes from

the sketch, and met the same look on his face that she had seen once before.

"Why, Roe! what is the trouble now?" she cried. "Have you been dreaming again?" and she laughed uneasily, while a shivering fear crept through her veins, and chilled her happiness.

But he remained silent. He had thought it all over on his way home and had arrived at the decision that she was deceiving him. Her pretty, mischievous explanation of his first experience, was a mere ruse to blind him, so he said to himself; and he had decided that he would not lead her on to further deception by asking for an explanation of the later occurrence, but would quietly leave the place at the first opportunity.

He shuddered as he thought how dark and dreary the future would be, with no thought of Carol in his plans.

He dared not look at her just now. The wound of his sundered hopes was too new. He walked steadily forward, looking out over the water, and striking savagely with his cane at the stunted heads of white clover that crowded up to the graveled walk.

Just then he felt a warm spot on his cold hand, and looking down he saw the pink fingers resting lightly on his bronzed knuckles. His eyes lingered for a moment on the shining ring, then he slowly

raised them along the plump arm, over the rounded shoulder to the quivering lips. He looked into her eyes with a reproachful expression which he made no effort to conceal.

Then he drew his hand from the soft pressure and walked hurriedly away. He wandered around for an hour or more, until it became quite dark.

Wearied at last with excitement and repressed emotions, he threw himself listlessly on a seat in a little alcove, formed by some low shrubbery.

A slight movement by his side drew his attention; the rays from an electric light shone full on Carol's pale face.

A pitiful mockery of a smile lighted it, when she looked in his eyes.

"Roe," she said, "you must tell me how I have offended you. I don't deserve this treatment."

Her voice was low and vibrated with unshed tears, there was a soft fire in her eyes and her cheeks were aglow.

He gazed at her curiously, and shifted uneasily in his seat. He was undecided whether to demand an explanation, or leave her with the mystery unsolved.

A glistening tear rolled slowly down her cheek and fell unheeded on her clasped hands.

The silent messenger touched his feelings, and in an instant he had decided.

"Carol, do you know Mark Payne?"

"Why certainly I do," and a surprised look brightened her face.

"When did you see him last?" was his next question.

"He was in Florida last winter. He spent some weeks in Escambria, and I saw him quite often."

"And you have not seen him since last winter?"

He looked squarely in her face, and the look frightened her.

"No, sir! I have not." There was a tone of defiance in her voice, that only served to confirm his suspicions.

"Girl, how dare you tell me that, when I saw you to-night, just before sunset, in Mark Payne's house."

She sprang from the seat, and stamped her slippered foot impatiently.

"Roe, 'tis false! I have not been away from the grounds to-day, and I think you are cruel and unkind to treat me in this way."

In half an hour the train was jolting along in the shadows of the tall forest trees, and Roe Mason, stretched out on a seat, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, was trying to convince himself that he had been just.

Carol watched him until the darkness swallowed him up.

Stunned and bewildered, she then turned as in a

dream, her senses all afloat on a great sea of mystery.

She wondered if she was the same, and how life would seem to her now.

She never knew just how she reached her room.

When Hannah found her, she was stretched across the bed in a half-unconscious condition, giving no sign of life, save an occasional low moan.

"A mental shock," was the physician's verdict.

Days and days of weary, and sometimes almost hopeless watching, followed, but youth triumphed at last, and she again roamed over the familiar grounds — but alas! how wan and wasted.

Her first thought on recovering consciousness, was of her father.

"He shall never know," she said.

And when he questioned her concerning Roe Mason's sudden departure, she spoke of urgent business.

Perhaps he doubted her explanation. If so, she never knew it; but she was conscious of a strange tenderness in his manner that was very like a healing balm to her wounded heart, and from the depths of her voiceless grief there arose a line of her father's favorite song,

'Tis darkest just before the dawning,"

CHAPTER XV.

THE SMUGGLERS.

The old house in the grove was the scene of another midnight meeting. The rude seats surrounded the lantern which stood on the floor.

French Joe drew a large silver watch from his pocket, looked at it a moment with a very wise expression on his wrinkled face, and said, "Boys, I tol' you now while I got plenty time, what you gon' do. I git word to-day from de boss. He come from Victoree. Dat's long, long way, far from here. He bring beeg lot of de sleepy stuff. Dem Chinaman down in Californy, dey gon pay good price for dat."

"What dey do wid dat, Joe?" said Dan, interrupting him.

"You ax me dat, Danyell? You work all dis time on de beezness, an' don' dnow what for dey use dat stuff. I tol' you den. Dem Chinaman put dat in de pipe an' smoke it. Dat make de drunk come."

"Humph!" said Dan, "dat's new kin' of whiskey den."

"Maybe—maybe not. I never try it myself, but dat's what de boss tol' me. But never min' dat now. Hark what I tol' you. De boss say we gon take good care. Some blaggard tol' de constable an' dey gon watch us close, dis time. Dat stuff gon be on de udder side to-morrow night, on de same place. I don' tol' you where dat ees, I know myself, an' dat's 'nuff. Now, Tomah, I tol' you what you do. You git dat hoss all ready. Make every ting strong an' all right. Den you stay by him, till Danyell come wid de stuff. Now Danyell, you hark what I tol' you. When we come on de cove all right, you take dat stuff on de hoss an' ride to de railroad. Dat's 'bout ten or eight mile I tink, You go straight wes' till you fin' de track, den you go south till you fin' de station. You see dere a man waitin'. When he come up to de hoss an' say 'Chinaman,' you know den he's all right. Pass over de stuff an' come home. You understan' what I say? You make meestake, den we all go on de lockup. You hear?" said he, bringing his hand down suddenly on the unsuspecting lad's knee.

Dan sprang to his feet and rubbed the suffering member for a moment, while an angry glare lighted his dull gray eyes.

Joe met his look with a provoking laugh.

"I wake you up. Dat's all. Now hark—everybody. To-morrow night when de bell strike ten, you, Jake an' Danyell, come on de cove. Make

sure nobody see you. Come by de bush, an' be careful. I gon make de boat all ready, an' wait for you close by de shore."

"But who's gwine watch an' make de signal, Massa Joe?" asked Jake.

"Dat's what I gon tol' you now, Jake. You make dat gal take your place dis time."

Jake moved uneasily in his seat. His feelings arose in rebellion against this arrangement, but fear kept him silent.

Joe commanded, and experience taught his well-trained minions the folly of disobedience.

"What you say, ole man? you gon let dat gal come?"

"I dunno, Massa Joe, but I spec' I'll haf to. Dar aint no one else to do de work."

"Dat's right, ole man," said Joe. "You make 'er go wid you to-morrow mornin', an' show 'er how she gon fix de light. Den she make no mistake."

Poor Jake! Already, in imagination, he saw his darling all alone, at the mouth of the cove, awaiting the sound of the midnight bell.

The following night settled down over grove and river, bringing a darkness that could almost be felt. The low rumbling thunder in the west told of a distant storm.

An occasional flash of lightning revealed the wily smuggler seated in a boat at the mouth of the

cove. The oars were balanced in the row-locke, and he held them, all ready to start.

The boat rose and fell on the little wavelets that lapped the shore, while he peered out into the darkness, his keen eyes and ears on the alert for the faintest scent of danger.

He arose to his feet with the first sound of the village bell, and counted the strokes on his fingers.

"Dat's ten o'clock," he whispered. "Dey'll come soon now."

Just then two moving figures emerged from some place of concealment, and noiselessly approached the shore.

Joe turned the boat's side to the bank, they stepped in, and were soon rising and falling on the waves, silent as statues, until they were well out in the middle of the river.

"Well, ole man," said Joe, "you fix dat all right wid the gal?"

"Yes, Massa Joe, I dun dat for shuah, but I feel kinder timersome 'bout it. Dat's gwine ter be pritty hard ting for my little gal. 'Sides dat, Ise kinder 'feard we's gwine hab trubble to-night."

"Wat's de matter now, ole man?" said Joe angrily. "You croak like a crow. You tink too much 'bout dat gal. You ten' your beezness. She's gon be all right."

"No, hones' truf. 'Taint all 'bout de little gal, Massa Joe, what 'sturbs me to-night, but Ise kinder

'spicious like. I seen sumfin' to-day what's mighty curis, an' I dun thought Ise gwine tol' you."

"Go ahead den. Tol' me quick. What's dat you see, hey?"

"Hol' on, Massa Joe. Ise gwine tol' you. I went out fishin' airly dis mornin'. When I come befront de cove I see two men walkin' round, peek-in' behin' de trees, an' kickin' over de leaves on de groun', an' Ise dun shuah one of dem pussuns was de sheriff-man what lives in de lockup. When dey seen me, dey walks off kinder keerless like, toward de road. You tink dat means trubble, Massa Joe?"

Joe let the oars drag in the water, and hung his head. He half suspected that Jake's story was a ruse, to save the girl from the task he had assigned her. But how was he to prove it? Much valuable time would be lost if he returned to the shore. He thought of Tom with the horse, of the accomplice at the station, of the valuable parcel on the Canadian shore, and he shook his head.

"No, no, Jake — you make meestake. Dat's only dem hunter from de town. I hear some quail 'mong de grass in de cove, dis morning. Dey look for dat. Pull de oar queek now, boys. You see dat boat?"

The big hull of the steamer looked alarmingly near, but they escaped, to be drenched and tossed about by the angry waves which she left behind her.

When they reached the shore, Joe jumped out of the boat and disappeared.

Jake sat down on the small seat in the bow, and looked over the great stretch of water. His thoughts were with that lonely watcher who sat in the darkness, with the lamp by her side and the matches in her apron pocket, awaiting the midnight bell.

Dan paced up and down the beach, occasionally indulging in a low whistle.

"Jake," said he at last, halting near the boat, "you b'lieve what you tell Joe 'bout de sheriff man?"

"Course I duz, boy. Massa Joe talk nudder way, but I'se sartin shuah dat's de sheriff man I seed. Might be he's huntin', but I'se kinder spicious. Sumfin' tells me we's gwine hab trubble to-night, an' I feel a' most shuah it's me or my gal what's gwine ter suffer. De fac' is, Dan, I'se gittin sick of dis kin' of work. 'Tain't jes right an hones'. Don't say nuffin' to Joe about it; but I'se made up my min' dis'll be my las' trip. I'se gwine quit de business. When it gits so dat little gal's got to help, I tink it's 'bout time ole Jake duz sumfin' else fer a livin'."

The trembling voice told the depth of the old man's feelings.

A low "hist" warned them of Joe's approach. He came staggering toward them, with a square

parcel in his arms. Giving a sigh of relief when he straightened up, after placing it in the bottom of the boat, he said:

"I tol you what, boys, dat's a beeg load for a small load," and he wiped the drops from his face with the back of his hand and looked out over the water for a moment.

"No light yit, Danyell?" he asked.

"No light on de cove, Joe, but I see bright light move roun' an' roun' on de middle groun'."

"Wat—wat you say," said Joe, excitedly, "you see it now, Danyell?"

"No, I don' see it now. It go out before you come."

"Dat's bad sign—bad sign boys," and Joe shook his head slowly. "Dat means bad luck for somebody."

"O, Massa Joe!" Jake's teeth were chattering with an audible sound when he spoke, "is you sartin shuah of dat?"

"Don' git scare ole man. May be plenty more folks see dat. I no say dat's bad luck for us. I say for somebody. Hark an' I tole you all I know 'bout de beezness.

"Long—long time ago, dat spot what you call de middle groun', was a leetle islan', where de bear an' de deer stop an' res' when dey swim de reever.

"Dat's where de beeg chief Kenesaw live wid

his gal. Waywea, he call 'er. She's fine squaw, tall an' straight like de pine.

"Bimeby dere come a noder chief, Ogemaw, what live on de Deer Islan' up de reever, an' he ax her fader he can take 'er for he's squaw.

"Ole Kenesaw he tink dat's all right, but Waywea she don' like it. She already promis' de young brave Wawbeek she gon be he's squaw.

"When Ogemaw come to bring 'er on he's weegwam he no can fin' her. Den he's mad, an' he make beeg fight wid her fader, an' when he paddle away in he's canoe he carry ole Kenesaw's scalp on he's belt.

"One day, two, three year after dat, Waywea she come on de islan' agin, an' she carry her papoose on her back.

"Wawbeek he's gon on de happy hunting groun' an' leave her all lone, so she come by her fader.

"She go on de weegwam, nobody dere. She look up de reever an' she see tall Injin stan' up on he's canoe an' paddle for de island'.

"When he come close on de shore she see dat's Ogemaw.

"When he see her he's eyes day shine like fire, an' he give de beeg war whoop an' jump out de canoe.

"Den she run like de deer to de weegwam an' call de great Manitou to save 'er.

"Jes den de islan' sink down in de water an'

drown 'em all, Ogemaw, Waywea an' de papoose.

"Ever since dat time de spirit of dat chief stay on dat spot an' look for Waywea. When he stay on de dark dat's all right, but when he light he's torch, den boys look out, dat's bad."

Just at this point in the story the muffled sound of the village bell tolling out the midnight hour was followed by the faithful sentinel's signal.

"Jump in boys. Dat gal's all right after all. Hey Jake?"

Jake pulled the oars with a steady had and was silent.



"She cut her way through the silvery path." - Page 57.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE COVE.

Jake had carefully instructed Marfa in the task which Joe had assigned her.

He had also provided her a shelter from the midnight air. A thrifty bunch of alders grew on the bank of the cove near its mouth.

Of this he formed an arbor by cutting out the center and weaving the long, pliable twigs together for a roof.

He brought a comfortable chair from the cabin, and here, wrapped in Mumsy's plaid woolen shawl, the brave girl took her seat soon after the boat left the cove.

She heard the measured thud of the oars growing fainter and fainter in the distance, and then ceasing altogether.

A smothered rasping sound told her that they had reached the shore and drawn the boat out on the beach.

And now began that long, lonely vigil, with no company but her own sweet thoughts.

The river, where "the sun peered at noon, and the stars peered at night," stretched out before her like a great murmuring plain.

The lights of the downward bound steamer, twinkling away in the distance, were the only signs of life in all that great gulf of darkness.

She drew the shawl closely around her shoulders, and brushed the clinging locks behind her ears, that she might catch the sound from the first stroke of the bell.

She heard the whip-poor-will in the air above her head give his drum-tap signal as a warning of his approach to his waiting mate, and then she heard the mournful plaint in answer from some distant forest tree.

Now and then the rustling of a falling leaf, or the snapping of a brittle twig beneath the stealthy foot-fall of some midnight marauder, drew her attention.

If the grim spirits of the red warriors, whose bones were crumbling under the sod, silently glided among the trees and bushes, as was their custom when in the flesh, she knew it not.

The water, with a monotonous swish-swash, worked its way into the sand and dirt of the bank among the bones, separating them gradually.

Now and then she heard a splash, which she mistook for the gambol of a frisky fish, and some

part of a crumbling frame—a skull perhaps—would start on its journey seaward.

She kept her silent vigil, all unconscious that other eyes besides those of her friends on the opposite shore, were anxiously awaiting her signal.

And now let us go back a few hours and visit the County Sheriff, impatiently awaiting the arrival of some of his subjects.

Seated in his office with his hat and cane near him, he watched the door with a frown on his face.

“Confound it,” he muttered, “if they don’t hurry up we shall miss the rogues after all. They were to start at ten o’clock and it’s after that time now.”

A shuffling and scraping of feet outside the door interrupted his grumbling, and he answered the rap with a hearty

“Come in, boys.”

The five or six constables and deputies, appointed for the occasion, nearly filled the little room.

“Late boys, late,” said the Sheriff, placing his hat on his head, and with the cane in his hand moving toward the door.

“Plenty of time, boss. They don’t leave the other side till the bell strikes twelve.”

How they had learned the plans of the offenders is best known to the initiated.

And now while Marfa was keeping her lonely watch they were scattered around the mouth of the cove awaiting her signal.

Cling, clang, came the peal of the bell through the murky night.

Marfa sprang to her feet and bent her head to catch the sound more distinctly. She counted the twelve strokes and then looked around as Jake had told her to do.

But how could they expect the poor child to see in that black dark, and how was she to know of the danger that lurked so near.

She took the match from her pocket, drew it across the rough stone, which Jake had placed by her chair, and touched the wick.

It flared up and revealed the brave girl to the eyes of the astonished officers.

What a transformation! Instead of old Jake, whom they had been informed they should find here, this young girl stood before them, like some beautiful vision.

They saw her step out from the clump of alders and give the signal. Then they heard the little "whiff" as she blew out the light, and she disappeared.

A superstitious feeling overcame them for a moment, but they threw it aside and silently drew near the mouth of the cove, where they halted, and awaited the coming of the boat.

Marfa's quick ear caught the sound of the dipping oars, and she clapped her hands together and

softly laughed, when she thought of how well she had performed her task.

Nearer and nearer came the boat, each stroke sounding more distinct, until she could see the moving shape in the distance, a little darker than the darkness.

She started toward the shore just as they entered the cove—Joe half standing, half kneeling, with all his powers concentrated on the management of the boat.

The silence was weighty, unbroken save by the pattering of the drops as they fell from the uplifted oars.

Suddenly, without a warning word, they heard a great crackling of bushes and tramping of feet.

“Surrender, you villainous smugglers! We’ve caught you at last,” were the ominous words that greeted the startled crew. Commands, threats and oaths followed, a perfect medly of sounds from the attacking party.

Joe dropped to the seat and grasped the oars.

“Back, back boys,” he said, “back in de reever.”

“O, Massa Joe,” cried Jake, clutching his arm, “fetch my little gal aboard firs’. Don’t fo’ de good Lawd’s sake leave dat poah chil’ behin’.”

Joe had a kind heart beneath his rough exterior. With a quick movement he forced the bow of the boat to the little point where Marfa stood, and in

obedience to Jake's whispered summons she stepped over the side."

"Now, back'er queek, boys," said Joe excitedly. "We no let dem blaggards ketch us dis time."

The officers reached the little point a moment too late.

"Halt!" cried their leader, "or I'll shoot."

A derisive laugh from Joe met the threat,

A half dozen flashes and reports sent a shower of bullets after the departing boat.

Then the officers left the scene grumbling, and finding fault with themselves and each other.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CAPTURE.

With Joe at the oars and Dan wielding the paddle they were soon out in the middle of the river.

"Dat'll do now," said Joe, and dropping the oars he threw off the hood of his tarpaulin, drew the back of his hand across his dripping forehead, and snapped his fingers to rid them of the moisture.

"I tell you what boys, dat's pretty close shave an' no meestake. Lucky ting for us dey no have a boat. Dey have us in de trap for sure, den."

Dan drew in the paddle and laid it across the boat.

"Wat we gon do now, Joe? We gon try an' make de lan' agin?"

No, no, Danyell. We gon let 'er float. De current take us down de reever. Bimeby, when we git below de town, may be we try agin. Dem blaggard git sleep an' go home by dat time, den we be all right. De ole man don' go far out de way when he git scare 'bout de Sheriff man. Hey!

Jake," said he, bringing his open palm down on the wooly head with a sounding slap.

An exclamation and groan followed.

"What's de matter, ole man? You no git over your scare yit? You git your little gal all right. What for you no speak?"

Marfa arose from the bottom of the boat and sat down on the narrow stern seat by his side.

"Uncle Jake," she said, stroking the trembling black hand that rested on his knee, "we're all safe now. Why don't you speak?"

He shook his head and raised his hand to his side, mumbling something which she could not understand.

"Speak—speak, ole man," said Joe, growing impatient.

"I'se shot, honey," and clasping the little hand in his own he lifted it to his side.

"Poor Uncle Jake," she cried, the great tears rolling down her cheeks. "He's shot! My hand is wet with blood—with uncle Jake's blood!" and she drew it shudderingly away, and let it drag in the water.

His head sank on his breast, he swayed sideways, and was in danger of falling overboard, but she caught his arm and held him until Joe came to her assistance.

Mumsy's shawl was folded for a pillow, and the

nearly unconscious man was placed in the bottom of the boat.

Marfa sat by his head and bathed his face with the cool water which she dipped up in her hand,

"Poor Uncle Jake," she repeated over and over again, when the lightning revealed him, motionless and apparently lifeless.

The storm had advanced from the distant west, and hung threateningly over their heads. They were floating with the current, the oars trailing from the row-lock, and no attempt being made to guide the boat.

On and they drifted, the silence only broken by an occasional low moan from the dark form in the bottom of the boat.

They passed the little city and drew near the grounds that surrounded the hotel. The electric jets threw out long streaks of light over which they must pass. Realizing the danger of being seen from the shore, while crossing these, Joe took the oars and made a circuit around them, and then turned the boat shoreward.

They were opposite the little station now, from which a freight train was slowly starting out.

"Danyell," said he, "we go on de shore now, pritty queek. You gon take de stuff on de back street troo' de town. When you fin' Tomah, take de hoss an' go on 'bout your beezness, like I tol you before.

I gon stay on de boat, an' fetch Jake an' de gal home."

But "The best laid plans of mice and men," etc.

The discomfited officers mounted the horses which they had fastened to the roadside fence, and started slowly homeward.

They felt sore over their defeat, and they strode along through the darkness, regretting the loss of the reward they were so near winning.

Just as they reached the brow of the hill that overlooked the river, a vivid flash lighted the water from shore to shore, and the little boat, a mere dot on the moving surface, was plainly seen.

They checked their horses and waited for the next flash. Yes, there it was, floating with the current.

They watched it until they were sure no effort was being made to again reach the shore, then they gave the restive horses the word, and away they galloped, stopping at each intersection of a cross street, and there awaiting the next flash, thus keeping the fugitives in sight.

"I'll bet a quarter they don't try to land till they get below town," said one of the party as they drew their horses up at one of these crossings.

"I agree with you," said the Sheriff, "and I'll tell you what to do. Two of you go ahead and get a boat, and be all ready to come in behind them when they try to come ashore, and will go along

slow and keep them in sight. We'll have them in a trap this time, I'm quite certain."

The little boat moved slowly shoreward. Joe's head turned from side to side, as if hung on a pivot, his sharp, glistening eyes peering into the darkness.

He dipped the oars carefully into the water, now and then whispering a word of caution to Dan.

Marfa sat on the seat by Jake's head, almost stupified with grief. It was a strange experience for the girl. When she tried to think of the exciting events of the night, her thoughts confusedly came back, again and again, to her great sorrow.

Her best friend was wounded, perhaps dying. How could she go on without him, and she would silently cry and stroke the limp black hand.

The boat came to a sudden stop as the bow ploughed into the yielding sand.

"Now, Danyell," Joe whispered, jump queek, an' take good care of de stuff.

Dan stepped out of the boat. He gave a frightened cry as he felt the grasp of a strong pair of hands on his shoulders, while he was relieved of the precious parcel.

Joe's ready wit deserted him. He tried to shove the boat back in the river, but when he heard the sound of oars behind him he sank to the seat and folded his hands hopelessly.

The shackles were slipped around Dan's wrists, and then the officers turned to the boat.

Joe arose without a word. He felt that resistance was useless.

"Hallo! what does this mean?" said one of the men, when he saw the dark form at their feet

"Get out of this," and he drew back his foot as if to kick the motionless object, but dropped it again when he heard the pleading voice: "Please mister, don't hurt him. He's shot, poor man. He can't get up."

The Sheriff turned to Joe.

"What does this mean, you French rascal, you? Who is that in the boat?"

"Dat's ole Jake, what live up on de grove. Some blaggard shoot 'im. He no speak, he no move. I think he's hurt pritty bad."

"What are you doing with that girl in the boat?"

"O, dat's Jake's own little girl. She don do nothing. You gon let her go, Mr, Sheriff."

There was a short consultation and then Jake was lifted from his hard couch, and borne away, followed by Marfa and the closely guarded prisoners.



A Gnarled Old Tree.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LETTER.

The prisoners were placed in an underground room and closely guarded, and Jake was taken to the servants' quarters, where medical aid was given him.

Marfa groped and staggered along behind her conductor, wondering if her terrible dream would never end.

She saw an open door, and felt a hand on her shoulder, gently shoving her into a room, and then she heard the click of a key behind her. She stumbled against a bed and fell across it.

The hum of excitement following the arrival of such strange guests, at so unusual an hour, had subsided and the long corridors were dim and deserted.

The threatened storm had burst at last. The wind shrieked around the corners, and sent the big drops over and under the verandas.

A tall figure in a trailing white robe came out from a shadowy corner and began pacing up and down, muttering and staring uneasily at the closed

doors as she passed them. To and fro she paced, her low mutterings gradually changing to a wierd chant.

“By the pricking of my thumbs, something precious this way comes.”

The thin fingers were interlaced, and she rubbed her thumbs together in a peculiar manner, as she repeated the words again and again.

At last she seemed to weary of this exercise, and as she paced in front of the long row of doors she reached out her hand and softly turned the knob of each.

At length one opening on the veranda yielded to her touch, and she passed out into the storm.

The wind caught her light garments and twisted them about her limbs, and blew the water from the dripping roof into her face and eyes, nearly blinding her.

She groped along near the wall, clinging to the shutters of the French windows as she passed them.

She clutched at one as a fierce blast staggered her, and it swung outward. She unhooked the sash, stepped inside and closed it behind her.

Mr. Eastman was aroused from his morning nap while the dawn was yet gray.

A timid knock at the door, and Carol's voice half smothered in tears brought him to his feet.

“O, papa ! where is mamma ?” she cried.
“Hannah says she's not in her room.”

"God pity her!" and Mr. Eastman hastily prepared for the search.

Everything at the boat-house was found undisturbed, and with a lighter heart he went over the grounds. The servants were aroused, grumbling at the early call, and no nook or corner was overlooked.

He took Carol, who was overcome with grief and excitement, to her own room, and left her with Hannah."

He then walked along the corridors, hardly knowing what to do next, when he heard a low, crooning noise, which sounded strangely familiar. It appeared to come from behind a closed door opposite him.

A key was fitted, and he entered the room, and there sat the wanderer in a low chair by the side of the bed.

Her damp robe fell away from her slippered feet and lay in a twisted heap by her side.

Her bright eyes looked out from her rumpled hair, which hung in a half coiled mass on her shoulders.

She motioned him away with her hand when he entered, and whispered:

"Hist! she sleeps."

He followed her eyes as she turned them toward the bed. He stepped backward in astonishment. What was the meaning of this?

He had just left Carol in her room, mourning her lost mother, and here she was sound asleep with the mother guarding her.

He looked at the two for a moment, and then went out and locked the door behind him, the monotonous crooning still ringing in his ears.

He went straight to his daughter's room.

"O, papa. Have you found her?"

"Come with me my child." She was awed by his manner.

"Is mamma dead?" she thought, but she dared not ask him.

She felt relieved when she entered the room, and saw her mother sitting with her back to the door, and heard the familiar crooning lullaby.

Mr. Eastman looked at Carol and then at the sleeping girl.

Carol looked at the girl and then at her reflected image in the mirror opposite her. Then she walked round where she could look in her mother's eyes.

The crooning ceased and a puzzled expression swept over the pale face as the poor lady looked from one to the other, and then with a piercing shriek she fell from the chair.

Hannah was summoned, and lifting her mistress in her strong arms, she carried her away.

The shriek aroused Marfa. She threw back the shawl and rubbed her eyes a moment, then she

sat up and looked around at the unfamiliar objects, then at Mr. Eastman and Carol.

She surely had seen that face before.

She arose to her feet, and the movement drew her attention to the mirror, and her eyes wandered as Carol's had done from the reflection to the strangely familiar features.

Mr. Eastman looked from one to the other, and a glad expression crept over his sad face.

Carol laid her hand on her father's arm and whispered:

"Papa, who is this?"

He stroked her hair fondly, and turning to the puzzled girl, he asked her name.

"Marfa, sir."

How like Carol's the voice sounded.

"You have another name, child. What is it?"

At first she made no reply, but when he questioned her in his gentle way, she told him all she knew.

Her deep sleep had shut out for a time the remembrance of her great sorrow, but the telling of her story brought it all back again, and when she told of the events of the night before, she broke completely down.

"Uncle Jake can tell you the rest," she managed to make him understand between her sobs.

"Poor Uncle Jake," she cried, "do please take me to him, sir."

He stroked her hair, his face beaming with that strange expression, which was altogether new to Carol, and a little twinge of jealousy shot through her mind, when she noticed how fondly his fingers lingered among the brown curls, so like her own. A few half angry tears rolled down her cheeks when he asked her to go to her room, and taking the strange girl by the hand led her away.

Jake was stretched out on a cot, the long slanting rays, which came in through an open window from the rising sun, resting on his face.

Marfa knelt down by his bed and whispered:

"Uncle Jake." He gave a little start and muttered:

"I hearn my angel den," Again she spoke:

"Uncle Jake, don't you know me?"

He picked the bed clothes with his fingers, and stared at her vacantly.

"Yes, honey, I knows you. I knows you's dar, but a black curtain hangs afore my poor ole eyes an' shuts you out."

"Poor Uncle Jake," she moaned, "what shall I do when you are gone?"

Mr. Eastman placed his hand on her bowed head and reminded her of his errand.

She looked at him in a dazed way, and then she placed the limp hand on the bed cover, and walked to the window that faced the rising sun.

Mr. Eastman bent over the dying man and questioned him about the girl.

He picked the bed clothes fiercely when he first heard the strange voice, but he grew calmer when Mr. Eastman spoke of her friendless condition, and at last he reluctantly confessed.

“Mumsy’s got de letta’ what come from Heaven wid de angel.”

Mr. Eastman could learn no more, and he went out, leaving the strange pair together, the one at the end of the path awaiting the dreaded summons, the other on the brow of the hill under a cloud of mystery.

He visited the prisoners, but they could tell him little more than he already knew. Joe said:

“I don’ no where Jake found’ de gal. I know he make fool of heemself ’bout ’er. He don’ care for beezness or noting. All de time he talk ’bout dat gal. May be when you go on de leetle house in de grove, de ole black woman, she tole you sumting.”

Mike grumbled when he was awakened and ordered to bring the carriage.

“Be jabers an’ its rather an airly ride they’re after takin’. What wid de bringin’ in of the shmugglers, an’ the nise of the storm, it’s hardly a wink of slape I’ve had through all the night, an’ now they do be draggin’ me out of bed afore the sun is hardly showin’ itself.”

Mr. Eastman took his seat in the carriage with that new strange look still on his face.

The trees sparkled with the trembling rain drops, and the glassy river gave no sign of the tragedy that had stained its bosom the night before.

When they reached the grove they saw a black face, under a red turban, peeping through a space between the rails of the fence.

Mumsy stepped through an open gateway, and shading her eyes from the bright sun with her outspread hand, she awaited their coming.

When she was told of Jake's misfortune, she said:

"I knowed it, I knowed it. I felt it in my bones, I'se dun shuah when I hea' dat shootin' if any one's gwine ter git hit, Jake's de one to cotch it," and she brushed a tear impatiently aside, as if she were ashamed of the weakness, and listened to Mr. Eastman's errand.

When he mentioned the letter she grew uneasy, and turned away as if to leave him, but he placed his hand on her arm while he said a few words in a low tone.

She looked at him in deep thought for a moment, then she led the way to the cabin.

She lifted the faded cushion from the rocking chair that had served Marfa for a cradle. The thick wooden bottom gave no sign of the secret it contained.

With a sharp pointed knife she pried out a thin, square piece of wood, which was neatly fitted in, and formed the cover to the cavity that held the precious letter.

It was yellow and crumpled, but Mr. Eastman learned something from the scrawl that gave new life to the bent shoulders and bowed head.

He assisted the portly Mumsy into the carriage, and giving Mike orders to return to the hotel, he seated himself opposite to her.

“Quare doin’s, these be,” said Mike, “when the master takes the likes of that in the carriage.”

CHAPTER XIX.

REVENGE

"Please take me to Jake, Massa," said Mumsy, when Mike opened the carriage door.

Marfa met her pale and tearless, and led the way to the low cot, where the white spread followed the outlines of the rigid form, then fell away to the floor in stiff folds.

She turned it carefully back, and they gazed for a moment at the familiar features. Then she touched the black cheek and drew her hand away with a shudder.

"What makes him so cold, Mumsy?" she whispered, and the picture of the pet fawn and her first experience with death, came into her mind with startling distinctness.

Mumsy took her by the hand and led her to Mr. Eastman.

"Go, honey, wid dis good Massa. I'se gwine come bime-by."

Marfa followed him, in a mechanical way, out into the bright morning.

He took her to Carol's room and sent for his daughter. She came rushing in flushed and excited.

She drew back at first, and that jealous twinge again wrenched her heart, when she saw the stranger seated in her favorite chair by her father's side, but when he arose and left the morning kiss on her forehead, just as he always did, she almost forgot it.

The sad face and drooping figure touched her heart, and her eyes went from it to her father's face for an explanation.

He beckoned her into the corridor, and while stroking her hair in the old familiar way, he said.

"I shall leave her with you for a short time. Be kind to her, my child. I am sure you will never regret it."

The friends of the family were surprised when they received a note from Mr. Eastman that morning inviting them to meet him in the reception room at a certain hour.

They were comparing notes, and moving restlessly about the room long before the appointed hour, so interested were they in the doings of this mysterious family.

But when Mr. Eastman entered with his daughter and the stranger they were seated, awaiting him in silence.

Carol wore a dainty morning dress of white, fastened at the neck and waist with pink ribbons.

The stranger was dressed in a gray woolen, fashioned by Mumsy's clumsy hands.

"Such a contrast," they whispered to each other.

But when they looked at the faces they forgot the dress. The resemblance was startling.

The brown waving hair, the expressive eyes, and the rounded, dimpled chins, were the same.

Mr. Eastman gave them seats, and then stood behind them, with a hand resting protectingly on either head.

His face wore a new expression, and his bowed head was lifted. He looked into the questioning faces a moment and then he told them the strange story of the mystery which had darkened his life, and clouded the mind of his beloved wife.

The substance of the tale was as follows:

His home was on the Ocklawaha river, in that sunny land which has been called the "Italy of America."

The house was a large, old fashioned wooden structure, with a wide hall running through the center, and roomy verandas entirely around it. The weather stained clap-boards bore marks of the warring winds of ocean and gulf.

The white sandy road divided it from the river bank with its border of great water oaks, draped with long gray moss.

A large garden spread out behind it, shaded and darkened by the thick growth of oaks, ti-ti, and umbrella trees.

The swinging moss gave the place so ghostly an appearance that the superstitious negroes could hardly be driven to enter it after dark.

Here he brought his young bride, and here was born to them a pair of twin daughters. Carol and Yula, they called them.

The resemblance between them was so strong, that the mother, at times, was unable to distinguish them. They were cared for by the same black aunty who had nursed their mother in childhood.

The nursery opened on the back veranda, and looked out on the shaded garden. 'Twas here that aunty brought her pretty charges in the cool of the evening, and swung them in the hammock, or, with one on either arm, paced back and forth, and crooned the cradle melodies with which she had soothed their mother's baby days.

Her bosom would expand and her face wear a proud look when the servants gathered in the garden path below her, and begged for a look at the "pritty honeys."

On the first anniversary of their birth the proud parents sent out invitations to a fete, in honor of the occasion. The verands and gardens were ablaze with light, and the whole house resounded with music and happy voices.

Of course the little daughters were the center of attraction, and aunty bore them proudly from group to group, fairly trembling with pride, as she listened to the words of admiration that were showered upon them.

When their bed time arrived she took them to the nursery and tucked them in their crib. Their rosy cheeks nestled close together, and their dimpled arms encircled each other's necks.

Aunty gazed at them with a smile on her shining face, and carried the picture in her mind when she left them to eat her supper with the servants.

When she returned the little Yula was missing. The tiny hollow in the pillow was still warm.

She gave the alarm, and in a short time the sounds of merriment and music had ceased, and the sympathizing friends had organized themselves into searching parties. But the dark grove and moss-shaded river border made the escape of the kidnapper an easy matter.

The morning brought no tidings of the missing one. The bereaved mother was prostrated, and for the time was happily unconscious of her loss.

Old aunty held her remaining treasure closely in her arms, and paced back and forth on the veranda, scolding the weeping servants, and sending them here and there in the vain search.

A scrap of the white wool cloak, which had

been taken from the hook, where it hung beside its mate, was found near the river shore, fluttering from a projecting twig.

The small boat which was usually drawn out on the sand, and fastened to a tree, was missing. Days passed and no tidings were received of the lost child.

It was remembered, long afterward, when there was more time for sober thought, that a field hand, named Tom, had disappeared about the same time. He had been punished by his master the day before the fete, but no particular attention had been given to this fact at the time.

Large rewards were offered and many clues were traced out that ended in disappointment.

Years rolled around and the fate of the missing Yula was still a mystery.

The mother's mind had partially given away, and the father bent beneath the double sorrow, but he never entirely lost hope.

The little twin daughter had grown to womanhood in ignorance of the cruel deed that had deprived her of her mate.

At this point in his story Mr. Eastman paused, drew from his pocket a crumpled piece of paper and spread it on his hand.

"Let me read this to you," he said, after explaining how it came into his possession.

The large, sprawling letters were printed with

faded red ink, and the words were misspelled and awkward. On one side was Mr. Eastman's address, and on the other was the following:

“Massa Eseman lick nigga Tom, Nigga Tom steal lille gal.”



“Florida.”

CHAPTER XX.

GIRLIE.

Two years, with their joys and sorrows, had rolled away,

Again the southern team, with the liveried coachman, pranced up the driveway that led to the stables.

And again a family party left the river steamer and came up the walk to the hotel entrance.

But what a change time had made in the appearance of some of the party.

Mr. Eastman had lost the sad expression and drooping shoulders, while his wife's face beamed with intelligence and happiness.

Mr. and Mrs. Roe Mason came next, and he looked in her face and smiled significantly when they passed by the alcove, where they had parted, after their stormy interview.

Marfa, or Yula as we must now call her, walked by Mumsy's side, silent and sad. Her thoughts wandered back to that eventful night, and the whole scene rose before her with startling distinctness.

Behind them all was Hanna, grumbling as she trudged along, carrying the shawls and wraps, which had been forgotten by the excited party.

When all were quietly settled down for the rest that the long journey made necessary, Mumsy and Yula stole away unobserved.

They followed the winding road until they reached the steps that led from the street to the top of the board fence, and then down again into the little cemetery.

Mumsy led the way among the moss-covered slabs and sunken graves, to a quiet, shady corner.

"Here it is, honey," she said, pausing by the side of a neatly rounded, grassy mound, "but—but," she continued, stepping backward, while a look of astonishment overspread her face, "chile, I'se like ter know what dis means," and she pointed to the tall marble shaft that bore this simple tribute :

UNCLE JAKE.

"Blessed are the Pure in Heart."

"I spec' dat's some moah of de good massa's work," she said, rubbing her hand over the polished surface.

Yula's thoughts were a confused mingling of gratitude for the kind parent who had been restored to her, and regrets for the loss of her childhood's protector.

She gathered the long-stemmed daisies that

grew among the tangled grass by the fence, and scattered them over the grave, and the tears that fell on the golden-hearted blossoms sparkled in the beams from the setting sun.

The following morning, when the dawn was tinting the new day with a rosy hue, Yula drew the key from her pocket and unlocked the boat-house door.

She had selected a boat the night before, and now while her friends were enjoying their morning nap, she launched the tiny white craft, with its soft cushions of green plush, and slipping the slender green oars into the rowlocks, she started up the river.

Before she left her southern home, she had gained her father's reluctant permission that she should make her first visit to the grove, alone.

The soft, misty waves of fog were rising in graceful wreaths, and melting away among the rosy-tinted clouds.

The gray gulls floated over her head, occasionally darting downward, and dipping their black-tipped wings in the cool water.

Faster and faster the boat sped on. The oars rose and fell with an even movement.

Her thoughts flew to the familiar cove long before she saw its inviting shade. She could hardly bear to wait, so impatient did she grow,

But when she saw the grove point, and she drew near the spot, the oars moved slower.

How familiar it all looked—that long stretch of sandy bench, where every curve was stamped by some particular incident of her childhood.

She could almost fancy she saw the honest face of Uncle Jake, smiling at her from that clump of alder bushes.

She turned the boat into the cove, and fastened it to the old tree on the bank.

Then, with a feeling as if she were walking in a dream, she followed the familiar path up the hill to the road.

Before her was the little cabin, half hid among the trees. As she approached the door a superstitious shiver ran through her veins, when she heard a slight shuffling movement, accompanying a strange grating sound.

She was at first half tempted to turn around, and run to the boat, then her courage returned, and she entered the cabin.

A dozen wooly heads were raised from the trough filled with yellow corn, and a dozen pair of eyes met her own with a mild stare.

She smiled at the up-turned faces, and then glancing around the room she saw a man, seated on a block of wood, in a corner of the crumbling fireplace.

He looked up from his work when her shadow fell across it. He was shaping an ax-handle with a jack-knife and a piece of glass.

"My goodness, little gal! You make me scare. How you come on de shanty an' I no see you?" and our old friend, French Joe, arose hurriedly, letting the wood and tools fall to the floor among the fine shavings, while the frightened sheep scamp-ered through the doorway, and began nibbling the grass.

As Yula took the outstretched hand, she felt that here was one humble link that connected her present life with the eventful past; and she heard for the first time how her father's influence and money had saved her friends from a term of years in prison.

"I don't carry no more dat stuff, after poor ole Jake git shot," and Joe slowly shook his head. "Dat's bad beezness. I stay on de place here, an' min' de cow an' de sheep. Den de sheriff-man he don watch for me."

When she left him he was testing the coins, which she had dropped in his hand, in his usual manner.

Then she followed the winding path through the clump of low pines, until she reached the cleared spot that surrounded the old ivy-draped house.

She looked around in astonishment. Could she have mistaken the path? No! There was the

familiar river scenery, and the little log house, with the ancient village just below it, on the opposite shore.

But where were the ivy-draped walls and the dormer window?

A gnarled old tree—
A sunken spot—
Some bits of broken glass;
A few gray stones,
And white-washed bricks,
Scattered among the grass.
That was all !

She turned away, and the tears rolled down her flushed cheeks.

How often in the past two years had her thoughts strayed away from happy home surroundings, and loving friends, to this well remembered spot.

How often in her dreams had she pushed the trailing ivy aside, entered the door, and climbed the rickety stairs that led to the library.

She had hardly realized it until now—but her solitary morning visit had been planned that she might enter the library alone, sit down in the little chair before the dormer window, and with the book on the desk before her, imagine she heard the voice of her beloved teacher repeat the pet name—*Girlye*.

She walked slowly toward the cove. A wall seemed to have arisen between her and the past. She would go back to that new life and strive for forgetfulness.

She saw the leafy arbor, where she had watched and listened for the sound of the midnight bell, that fateful night.

A tall figure arose as she came opposite the entrance.

A familiar face looked down on her.

Two pair of eyes met and the sweet secret escaped from the open windows of the soul.

A familiar voice repeated the pet name.

"Girlie, I have waited for you. I knew you would come."

"Oh! Master Payne!" was the glad cry.

THE END.

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